

ThinkWell

LIKE A THINKTANK, BUT DEEPER

ISSUE #15

April 1993 (A.S. XXVII, barely)

COMMENTS ON THINKWELL

I think *ThinkWell* is great! I'm overjoyed that you started it, and I want to congratulate you on its success. I was very impressed. I love a good philosophical discussion, and it is rare (in my experience) for an amateur press association, bulletin board, or journal to maintain such a high level of discussion on basic issues without sinking into the pit of petty bickering or floating off into hazy generalities. Congratulations, and please sign me up! *ThinkWell* is absolutely incredible. ...I'm kicking myself that I wasn't in on the beginning of these things. Can you get me past issues? I'm looking forward to joining the printed brouhaha. ...treat for the mind and spirit... Thanks for the time and effort you've put into *ThinkWell*. It is very well done. *ThinkWell* is the highlight of an otherwise dull existence! When it arrives, literally everything stops until I've read it through. Keep up the great work on TW! It's wonderful to have a forum like this where everyone recognizes that there aren't necessarily right and wrong answers, and I think I get a great deal more out of TW than I have out of many of my college classes. This open forum you've created is a credit to you and a credit to the Society. With all the articles for "newbies" about these days it was nice to see some articles for us "olde tymers." I have taken the liberty of not only subscribing but ordering every back issue you have. I must say that it's extremely stimulating to be associated with such a literary, articulate crowd. They express themselves so beautifully! I guess it helps that we can sit down and compose and edit and re-write before unveiling our literary masterpieces. I would like to think that everyone in *ThinkWell* talks as beautifully as they write (but I don't think so, with the exception of William The¹, who *does* talk that way). *ThinkWell* is great. The only thing I look forward to receiving in the mail more than *ThinkWell* is *Diehard*, my Boston Red Sox periodical. How refreshing to find words in print written and edited by people who care about the language. I work

with manuscripts from University presses—you should see some of *them*! Reading it was kind of like sitting around a campfire and discussing things with a roundtable crew of extraordinary leaders whose ideas I've respected for a long time. Has it occurred to you that you have created the finest consensus building tool in the history of the SCA? You have, you know. Thanks for some enjoyable thinking.

FROM THE EDITOR

Twice lately I've been asked, "Why are you doing this?" Once it was asked admiringly (in a tone of "what manner of human are you?"), and once suspiciously (as in "what the hell are you trying to pull?"). I would like to encourage human beings to be honest with themselves and each other, and to become convinced that each one of us is a unique and precious part of the world. Actually, the preceding sentence is a recent quote from Fred Rogers, but it's a good one. Maybe I just want people to sit calmly for a few hours once in a while and reflect on the goodness of life, and their own potential to affect others positively, to have some laughs which aren't at another human's expense, and to learn a few interesting facts in the process. The explanation for today is that it's like Mistress Ælfled's Neighborhood.² It's intended to help you to know more and to feel better about yourself.

ThinkWell came from the desire to exchange good ideas with people I don't ordinarily get to sit and talk with hour after hour, to learn other people's philosophies, to get new answers to old questions. I wanted to create an outlet for those people who were bursting with questions and answers but had no one to hear them.

Something else is happening, though. The readers are wanting to meet these other people. Some are planning more interkingdom travel. They're talking about coming out of their own kingdoms' camps at big events and visiting the neighbors. This wasn't part of the original plan. I didn't know it would turn into an interkingdom neighborhood.

Hi, neighbor.

¹ "William The" is short for "William the Lucky," who will now know who wrote this comment.

² Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, a show for young children that shows on U.S. public TV, is in its 25th season.

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QUESTION ON WEDDINGS

Does anyone out there have info they would be willing to share on medieval, SCA-oriented, or pagan weddings? If so, could you write directly to me, as I'm working on a project with a photographer-friend who's interested in the extremely theme wedding. Any info would be helpful!

Mistress Dorren of Ashwell (Barbara L. Ding)
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THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY

Lord Gerard Montjoie de la Fontaine, Baronial Champion of Flaming Gryphon and Seneschal of the March of the Unicorn, requests our assistance. Before September, he wishes to collect commentary, poetry, reference material, quotes, etc. on the virtue of humility. We can begin an exchange here to aid him, and you could contact him directly. His SCA name is above and the rest is:

Derek R. Harp (513) 523-4294
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Oxford OH 45056

JUST FEEL LIKE WRITING?

I sent a pack of TW to Countess Elina of Beckenham, after hearing she was in Somalia. Here's part of her letter:

The number one problem with sending me the *ThinkWells* (don't get me wrong, I love them) was that I want to send off a reply to many of the queries and comments. Such is difficult when you have to write your letters between fire-fights and escort missions—it distorts the thinking. I could E-mail you a note but I don't have my computer. Who am I fooling—I don't have electricity! Life sucks here and I want to go home! Even the most primitive of camping sites I've been to was luxury by comparison, and after an event, you can always go home.

This was written at the end of March, 1993. If you want to send a note or postcard just in case she's still there, please do! The worst thing is that she may be home already and she'll get the letter late and in the U.S. [Wait, that's not the worst thing—that's the best thing!]

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DIRECTORY

A list of names, many with addresses, is being prepared to go out with the next issue of *ThinkWell* so that readers may contact one another directly. If your questionnaire is in and you said "good idea" to that first question, you should be on. If you're interested in being added, just let me know.

ABOUT WARS...

Why are we so focussed on wars, anyway? I think it's sad that so much of the "normal" SCA year is consumed with getting ready for wars, going to wars, and doing post-mortem on wars. When I first joined the Society, circa Pennsic 3, Pennsic was literally a weekend event; now there are people there for three weeks or more. There are places where even arts competitions (a whole topic I'd rather not get started on) are built around producing "war stuff"—pavilions, furniture, lanterns, etc. It seems to me that it would be more possible to win great glory in single combat than in a melee; why do so many fighters like melees so much? (As a spectator, it's certainly easier to see what's going on in a single combat...) Is it the less-skilled fighters who prefer melees, or is there something I'm not seeing?

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

It's awfully hard to get 1000+ fighters on the field and hope all of them are gentlemen and gentlewomen. If the sides are uneven, the underdog usually puts on a cheerful face. Both Pennsic and Estrella have had to deal with one army quite a bit smaller than the other. The issue of fairness is becoming a vocal and important topic. Perhaps, it will resolve itself in the *planning* stages of wars in the future.

One fact is evident. At a truly large war, it is almost impossible for any one kingdom to stand, and win, by itself. This is a good thing. Historically, battles were sometimes won by diplomacy and alliances. In the Current Middle Ages, this has become a firm reality. Dietrich is correct in lamenting the loss of chivalry and honor in wars. In its place we have a win attitude with little concern for the losers. Pity. Realism versus romance. I'm not sure who the real losers are anymore. On one hand, it's worth a war to teach that we all need allies. On the other, we can, in our success, treat our friends (the "enemy") like scum.

—John the Bearkiller [Meridies]

To Dietrich von Vogelsang: Given the mix of hosts and guests at Estrella (and Pennsic) classic two-sided battles with heavily recruited allies may lose their appeal for a lot of people. Being on the side with too many people is no fun either, for those of us who get held in reserve or choose not to join in the "genocide maneuver."

More complicated scenarios may have to be created, such as those Calontir has used in its Lilies Wars for many years.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

In Ansteorra, the prevailing attitude remains what I think of as "Alamo Syndrome." It is even *more* glorious to lose, overwhelmed, than it is to win with superior numbers (as long as you take with you more of them than they kill of you). Outnumbered Ansteorrans often speak of how they can't lose.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

This "warpoint for arts" business—Am I the only one who thinks it's goofy? Is this like the emperor's new clothes?

—Ælfled of Duckford [Outlands]

AUTHORIZATIONS

Elinor! Elinor! As a marshal and fighter of many years, I fully appreciate waterbearers, *most especially* when it's done well. I don't mean to suggest that there aren't people who could learn to do it better, so as not to be dangerous to themselves or others. But I hate to see a nationally-mandated *test* as a prerequisite to such worthy effort. However, you have raised points I never considered, and I thank you.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

FORMALITY/TITLES

The simplest and most elegant solution I know to Master Giovanni's dilemma (and congratulations for having it, Sir!) is to use the martial title, Sir, in a martial context (i.e., on the field, when marshalling, when teaching fighting, etc.) and the civilian title, Master, in civilian circumstances. If you wear your belt and chain *and* your Pelican medallion, you shouldn't even confuse most newcomers, unless they're so new they won't understand the use of either title anyway!

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

Giovanni—I hope you will use “Sir” on the field, if only to warn your opponents, in case any don't know you. As for the rest, you'll never stop people from calling you Sir Giovanni. They'll be trying to compliment and congratulate you on your knighthood, all with the best intentions. In western society, we revere the knights of the round table, and few actually are able to transfer this sort of honor to the other peerages. I have been aware of your reputation since before you were a Pelican, and I have immense respect for you on that basis; all I know of your fighting is that you've just been knighted. And congratulations! When I was knighted, it was a “promotion” from Viscount.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

I address the Crown as “Your Majesty,” almost never by mere name. On the other hand, I address our Baron and Baroness as “Your Excellency” only when discussing official matters, and by name and/or honourific (Don, etc.) at other times. Heinlein fans may refer to the conversational vs. formal mode of address in Chapter XV of *Time Enough for Love*. I suppose my view is that the Crown is never really off-duty, just as John the Bearkiller thinks they have no “time out.” Also, one should always use formal address in court. It's the most formal occasion most of us see.

For several years, I, too, was addressed—and once even called before the Crown—by the title “Mistress” to which I was not entitled. My usual reply was a gently polite, “No, Lady.” It seemed about as non-condemning and non-judgmental as I could come up with.

Liran is partially correct when she reports that people bow but remain standing in court. Many people do indeed kneel before the thrones. Unfortunately, those who do not are frequently groups of people (chivalry, households, and such). While in our recreated periods it was not so, in the CMA, court is a spectator event; not-quite-entertainment. If the populace cannot see and hear what is going on, why should they be present at all? And how many of us resemble

windows rather than doors?

However, I do resist applauding after every award-plus-vivat in court. Applause of appreciation for an extremely well-deserved and long-overdue award is acceptable, but if we applaud after all of them, it seems as if we are applauding the presentation (9.8, 9.5, 9.7...) rather than the recipient. The decibel level of the “vivat” is enough, I think.

—Æthelyan of Moondragon [Ansteorra]¹

Let me add to Justin du Coeur's and Einar Lutemaker's musings.² In Meridies, I have been addressed as “Mistress” several times by well-meaning folks who assume “you've been around forever, you must be an ‘X’.” Einar's words are quite close to what I use as a gentle correction. It acknowledges my respect for the orders, it doesn't say whether I think I deserve to be there or not, and it saves the other person from embarrassment. That last, by the way, is the ONLY important thing in this whole exchange, as far as I'm concerned—make sure the other person doesn't lose face. (No matter what kind of a peer you are, people should feel that quiet undercurrent of courtesy, grace, gentility and honor coming from you—kind of the way the Mazda motor used to go “hummmmm” in the commercials.)

—Tamera FitzGloucestre of the White Boar [Meridies]³

When someone mistakenly calls me “Your Grace,” I always say “I'm not graceful, just excellent.” Gets a laugh and gets the point across too!

—Countess Morag Campbell of Glenbourne [An Tir]⁴

I don't have a problem with being given a title I don't deserve. “Why thank you for the compliment! Actually, I'm not a knight.” The situation that I have trouble dealing with is somebody who knows damn well that I don't have it. When can you say when someone asks you, “Why aren't you a Laurel?” I've heard of this happening to several people, and I can't come up with a non-fatuous answer. “Gee, I don't know. I'm never there when they discuss it. I'm not in that circle, you know.” Any suggestions?

—Robin of Gilwell [Ansteorra]

¹ Adèle Æthelyan of Moondragon is a mid-14th-century Englishwoman trying to raise sheep while interested in rapier combat, children, and clothes. Elisabeth Zakes works in typesetting with a sideline as a wedding consultant (professional autocrat), though her main career is motherhood.

² Issue 14, page 3

³ Joined SCA 1974, Kingdom Chronicler '75-'77, Grant of Arms and Court Barony somewhere in there, Society Chronicler '77-'80, creator and (with Vargskol Halfblood) co-editor of the first edition *Known World Handbook*, Princess and Queen of the East '79-'80, burned out '82-'89, active again '89, Married Sir Cai '91, Moved to Meridies '92, currently Bard of the Barony of the South Downs and the Barony of Thor's Mountain in Meridies, busy having fun. “Joellyn Auklandus is an actress and writer who does secretarial work to bring in her share of the grocery pig while she works on an historical novel dealing with World War I.”

⁴ Countess Morag has been Queen of An Tir, Baroness of Three Mountains, and has several awards, for such things as arts, service, persona development, and best death on the field. She has lived in Caid and An Tir. She cooks, dances and is a scribe. She is also Laura Singh, who has a degree in French. She grows roses, and has two boys who are angels.

I wear Pelican insignia most of the time, and still many people think I have a Laurel. More than one-quarter of the people whom I politely correct then have to have the Pelican explained to them. Really.

—Adelicia of Gilwell [Ansteorra]¹

Since I have once or twice been the only female around HG John the Bearkiller, I have twice been mistaken for his queen. I hear it's happened to other women as well. John, bless him, did not correct the people involved; I waited until I or someone else could do it privately, as that kind of mistake is invariably embarrassing to the one making it.

Like Master Einar, I have now and then been addressed as "Doctor" outside the SCA, but I feel it would be a waste of time to correct those with whom I will probably never correspond again, so I usually say nothing. I deal constantly with academics in my work, and myself prefer to call someone "Doctor" who isn't than call someone plain Mr. or Ms. who is. No one's gotten unhappy about it yet.

Incidentally, I agree wholeheartedly with Ælflæd about being hugged. Caid is a touchy-feely place, and I can't count the times I have been assaulted by complete strangers. For someone like me who dislikes even the "innocent" handshake (so masculine!), being hugged by someone when you do not invite it feels equivalent to being mauled.

—Sister Kate [Caid]

Courts seem more "real" to me (more period) when the king and queen maintain a formal aloofness than when they're saying "Cool!" and hugging people. I don't mind being hugged later, or seeing other people hugged 20 times after court, but for me it kind of ruins court to have everyone being hugged by the king and the queen. To the very uninvolved, it can get to be like watching someone else's family reunion, besides seeming extremely inauthentic. (I started to say "modern," but Queen Elizabeth doesn't appear to hug people after she knights them, or gives them an awards, or makes them peers.)

—Ælflæd [Outlands]

I'm Sion. "Master Sion," usually has a request at the other end of it.

A friend, who was raised somewhere they ALWAYS use titles, kept calling me Master Sion, in spite of requests to stop. Then he got a Court Barony. When I went to congratulate him after court, it was, "Oh Your Excellency, congratulations, Your Excellency. I'm so happy for you, Your Excellency. My, Your Excellency, but your coronet is remarkably lovely, Your Excellency. And isn't the sky a most remarkable shade of blue, Your Excellency. See how it complements Your Excellency's coronet. Don't you think it complements His Excellency's coronet?..."

He asked, "Sion, am I going to get one 'Your Excellency' for every 'Master Sion?'"

¹ Adelicia learned about the SCA by way of a noisy jobber in chainmail, at one o'clock in the morning (a good story she might tell us later). In everyday life she has a philosophy degree from the University of Texas at Austin, with three minors: geology, biology and Western European history—(excellent preparation to write for *ThinkWell*, don't you think?)

"Why, whatever would make you think that, Your Excellency?"

—Master Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]²

I've had the pleasure of living in a variety of kingdoms (West, Trimaris, Caid, Atlantia, Meridies) and visiting many more. Each has its own uniqueness and quirks that make the game special in that area. For instance in Trimaris, about 25-30% of the fighters are female. For the West it's closer to 3-5%.

In Caid you are only called to the fighting field by titles you have won by fighting. This is true in other kingdoms, but I found out when I caused great confusion signing up for a tournament as Countess Elina in Caid. They could not believe that I would claim such a title on the field without having earned it, and a great many people were awed at a female who could have won Crown.³ It never occurred to them that the distinction between fighting titles and other titles was not made in all kingdoms. Fortunately, one of their more worldly Duchesses saw the confusion and straightened it out.

All this prompts my question. Assume you are from a kingdom with such a tradition and you and your husband both fight. He wins the crown and you are count and countess. You win the second and become duke and duchess. He won the county, she the duchy. Is he called to the field as Count, and she as Duchess? Would you call her Countess to the field although she did *not* win that title fighting? Would you dare call a Duke in such a case anything but Duke?

Personally, I contend that the only "fighting" titles are those of Sir and Master of Arms, and Crown Prince or Princess, depending on who won. You become Crown Prince/ss by winning Crown Tourney. You are crowned king by maintaining eligibility and fulfilling the obligations as Prince. There have been those who won crown and could not be crowned. You gain the title Count/ess, Duke or Duchess by successfully completing the reign, not necessarily by fighting and winning Crown. How then is my husband's title of Count any different from mine of Countess as it recognizes the exact same thing—the successful completion of a reign?

—Countess Elina of Beckenham [hard to say]⁴

² I am usually a 13th century border Welshman serving Gryfydd ap Owen baron de la Pole in Powys (Yes, it's 1293; i move with the times.) I've held offices: seneschal, chronicler, MoS, dancemaster, and currently I am the Chancellor Designate Regis Universitatis Medeteranneum. I was Laureled in October '89 by Tadashi and Ariake for dance and choreography—just in time for my 30th birthday. I teach, create, perform, serve where serve I might, and ride rein over a herd of apprentices and students.

³ The author named Maythen as the only one she thought had done so (Mists Coronet), but we know of Rowan in Ansteorra (Ansteorra Crown). Are these the only ones?

⁴ I'm Countess Elina of Beckenham. I was the ninth Queen of Trimaris. I'm a Laurel most noted for domestic sciences and have been in since I was 14. My husband is Duke Steven of Beckenham who has made his titles and name in the West. He is also a Laurel. Mundanely I am an officer in the U.S. Army, Military Police Corp, presently in this god forsaken, cursed country of Somalia. AKK!

How many Somalies does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

(None. I already said there wasn't electricity.)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Issue #4 of *Chronique* has a photograph of Countess Elina, facing page 37.]

In the West, the typical usage has been for the fighter to note on his/her lists card the title(s) that they want the Heralds to announce. Custom has been to use only their highest rank and preferred peerage appellation (e.g., I register as Earl Sir Kevin Perigryne, forgoing the Viscount, Master, [both] Baron[s], GoA, ORL, etc.). Over-use of titles in lists announcements is discouraged to save time and energy (we haven't had a Crown Lists with less than 60 entrants in nearly two decades). Occasionally, tournament finalists are announced with full fruit salad, ruffles and flourishes.

As for using only titles won on the field, I believe that this is a matter of kingdom law and custom, not an SCA rule. In any case...MEA CULPA! It's my fault, I originated the darn rule! Way back in the dim recesses of time when I was Earl Marshal of the West there was a first female fighter to authorized for the lists (Trude Lacklandia). Among the more conservative fighters there was concern that chivalry would prohibit them from striking a *lady* [disguising their true desire to keep fighting a males-only activity (and let mundane civil rights law go hang)]. As a compromise, the rule was made that a fighter could only be announced on the field by titles they had won on the field, thus if a woman fighter could not be announced as "Lady" or "Mistress" or "Baroness" her opponent could rationalize that his opponent's gender was unknown and he was not knowingly striking a Lady (is that convoluted or what?).

Historical Note: This controversy was also the origin of Trude's Cadwyn ap Cheshire persona.

Of course, as female fighters have attained true fighting equality, conservatives cling to this rule/custom as a defense against the former consort of a victorious female fighter using the emotionally loaded titles of Viscount, Count/Earl, and Duke on the field.

—Kevin Perigryne [West]¹

Two stories about titles:

One Pennsic, some years ago, after dusk, a herald stopped and cried our camp with the moment's announcements. It was 100 degrees in the shade and we were camped off the beaten track. There were a dozen or so folks in the camp cooking, eating,

¹ I first became acquainted with the founders of the SCA in spring of 1967 (late AS I or early II). My and my lady's first court event was Twelfthnight AS II. I was knighted in AS VI and became Earl Marshal of the West shortly thereafter. Among other things I have been an author (the original Knight Marshals' and Fighters' Handbooks), an autocrat, a dancing teacher, a landed baron (Golden Rivers), a newsletter publisher, an armorer/weaponeer, a calligrapher, an archer...come to think of it in 26 years in the SCA, I guess I've taken a shot at almost everything. I've lived through almost the entire history of the SCA, have personal recollections of much of what took place (from a West Kingdom point of view) and can be blamed or given credit for some of it too.

Descended from a Norman companion of William the Conqueror who had the good sense to marry the Scots heiress to the Earldom he was granted, Kevin Perigryne is a co-eval of Robert the Bruce, who knighted him after Bannockburn where he had commanded his father's force of pike men. After a long career with much travel and many experiences, he has retired from combat due to his cumulative wounds and lives on his estates as quietly as can be managed on the English border in the 14th century.

Mundanely, Phil McDown is a Systems Analyst and Project Manager for the San Francisco Health Department. I've been married to Patti (Countess Patrice de Coeur Fidel) for nearly 23 years and we've been a team in life and the SCA since we started.

working on armor, and generally schmoozing. So after he finished, I invited him to sit down and have a drink by way of thanks for his service. I asked him his name. This was evidently a tactical mistake, for he launched into a canned speech of epic proportions about his name, where he came from, why he was in whatever kingdom he was in, etc. Now, being folks who mostly approve of having a fully-developed persona, although not necessarily in sharing the details with anyone, we listened quietly while he continued. Meanwhile a lad of about ten was wrapping a sword. He quietly asked his mother, "Mom, is this right?" She looked at him a bit peeved and said, "Why are you asking me? Ask His Grace." At the words "His Grace," this fellow fell as though poleaxed. He prostrated himself on the ground mumbling, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Is there a duke here? Please forgive me." When I informed him that there were three dukes, two duchesses and random knights, laurels and pelicans within earshot, I feared for the fellow's life. It took quite a while for us to calm him down and convince him that we are all just folks. This is the danger when opposite ends of the formality spectrum meet.

At Pennsic VI a group of Western dukes came. They were all big-time names to us and bathed in celebrity. After one noteworthy engagement, I climbed up a hill to sit down and recover. As I sat there, another dead guy chanced to pull up some grass beside me on the hillside. We chatted. After a bit I said, "My name is Gyrth Oldcastle, it's nice to meet you," or words to that effect. he replied, "Hi, I'm William." And we went on to have a very pleasant and interesting colloquy about small unit tactics. I had no title, rank, or fame to boast of. He, on the other hand, was Duke William of Houghton. Now I am fairly sure that he knew that I knew, but his modest courtesy and informality has always impressed me and makes me think warmly of him.

—Gyrth Oldcastle [Atlantia]

I am "only" a Royal Peer. It means a lot to me though—it is how I feel important and happy. I didn't care much for the reversal of the OP that was suggested, making new royals outrank older ones, but only because it would directly affect me. I can understand why the thought would occur, but really I have seen people like Viscount Frederick of the West Tower, Baron Three Mountains, Prince An Tir, show up at an event, and seen the awe in the faces of newer people who hadn't seen him before. I don't think reducing his place in the OP would reduce his stature in legend.

An incident from the last Pennsic I attended: I met a very nice Lord in the laundry. He asked about my circlet—where what I from and what did it signify. I told him I was a countess of An Tir. When did I reign, he asked. I replied that I had had the honor of being the first Queen, back in AS 16 or so. His eyes grew huge and round and he said in hushed tones "You mean, you're Queen An Tir?" I had never heard that terminology before, but I LOVE it. If folks would rather term it "Countess An Tir" that would be cool too, but no one here uses either. I don't run around introducing myself that way, only as I said to him if asked. We don't need to legislate such a thing, grandfathering it or whatnot. Just start doing it whenever you have opportunity to introduce such a person about.

—Morag Campbell of Glenbourne [An Tir]

TROUBLEMAKER! Don't encourage Artan this way. He was attached to the idea of naming Christopher of Houghton the first Duke of the Outlands or something, even though he was already a duke before the Outlands was a kingdom, because if it caught on it would affect other things. I argued that there were already dukes and duchesses in the Outlands, and there would be more.

I don't like this suggestion, partly for reasons stated before: Corpora already defines countesses and duchesses and so forth. It doesn't matter what kingdom it is. Although this would make Gunwaldt the Viscount Outlands (or Prince Outlands) *and* same stuff/kingdom, and while it's an interesting bit of trivia that he was first prince and first king, those who were prince later were just as legitimately prince.

Some of Elina's arguments (above/before) apply to this as well.

For territorial barons, I understand them getting to be Baron Wherever forevermore. In most cases they created that barony from nothingness. Not so for first kings and queens. Their term is much shorter, and the direct effect of their service on the creation of the kingdom might coincidentally exist, but it's not why they're made king or queen.

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

[this is from a later letter from Countess Morag; it's not in direct response to the above, but it follows, sort of]

While [Royal Peers being "Peers of the Society"] is technically true, I feel there is a distinct difference between being a Countess of An Tir and being a Countess of the West. Our perceptions of Society are formed by our surroundings. This is the main point of your newsletter, unless I'm mistaken—to explore this difference. A person who ruled once or more in one kingdom, then ruled another after that has a different concept of ruling than someone who had ruled only one kingdom several times. I believe there is a difference between Edward Ian, Earl of Caid, who is also an Earl in An Tir, and Davin, who is an Earl in *and of* An Tir. There's an old German prepositional phrase "von und zu" which means literally "from and at." It expresses this concept very well. I'm a Countess in the Society, a Countess of An Tir, who for a time was a Countess *in* Caid. I KNOW that my attitudes about ruling and the Crown are very different than those of my Caidan and Western Sisters. I've talked to enough of them to see similarities between those of any one kingdom.

If nothing else, a royal peer will be more aware of the expectations of the other peerages in the kingdom he ruled than he would be in a kingdom whose throne he had not occupied.

...

I am proud to consider myself a Countess of An Tir, and will continue to introduce myself so wherever I may reside. You, of course, will do as you think best.

—Morag Campbell of Glenbourne [An Tir]

The concepts *within* a kingdom differ greatly, too. I fear that, as was attempted in Ansteorra so long ago, laws would be made to discriminate between "native" and "foreign" royal peers. Since it has happened before and was squelched, I think bringing it up again could conceivably cause problems.

Christopher has been king of three kingdoms. Artan has been king of the Outlands three times. Which knows more? Whose experience is more recent? Whose is broader? I hold that it makes no difference. They're both dukes, they both live in the Outlands. Verron's a duke; he lives in the Outlands; he hasn't been king of the Outlands (so far as of this writing). He's every bit as much a duke, and if some privilege or other were extended to dukes in this kingdom, it should apply to Verron and Christopher no more or less than to Artan. The only time Verron would lose out is if there were a trivia test on former kings of the Outlands.

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

PEER FEAR

I learned (in the Outlands) that if I'm someplace new I look for peer regalia to help identify those with a clue. Sometimes this doesn't work but usually the peer will know who is in charge (if s/he isn't) and can point the way. I guess this means I don't have much peer fear anymore.

—Shawntel Haroldsdottir [Meridies]

Until reading *ThinkWell*, I believed that if you were not Someone, meaning well known, lots of awards, or a Peer, that no one wanted to hear what you had to say. That may be true for some but I am beginning to think that it is not true for all. Be that as it may, I still suffer from Peon Syndrome. I may have something to say but will Sir Exalted So & So bother himself to listen? I was once introduced to the Queen and told that if she needed anything I should help her. I would have gladly done so but I was so shy I had a hard time even saying hello. Then there was the fact that I didn't know when to go up to her Majesty and say "can I get you anything?" What if I accidentally interrupted something? She may have looked like she was just sitting on the throne talking in some shade, but maybe she was really watching something unobtrusively and I came along and got in her way? Then there is the age old problem of being considered a throne licking toady, which I don't consider myself and I don't want anyone else to consider me. How can a person win? Especially a newcomer to the Society?

Conquering Peer Fear is something I work on every day by screwing up my courage and at least saying Hello, by reminding myself that they too were once peons even if they don't remember it, by trying to live up to the role models I have chosen for myself and believing that they will like me if I continue to try to behave chivalrously, and maturely. I take the SCA very seriously, but I have to remind myself that becoming a Peer is not the only issue in my life. I want to know that I am growing and learning and I want to be having fun in the Society. If I can look at myself and like what I see then Peer Fear becomes less of a problem.

—Lady Taryn Brannick [Outlands]

At my first big event which was the Twelfth Night A.S.XXVI held in Ynys Fawr I met a fair number of visiting peers and found them all to be very friendly and approachable. One of them was an overseas visitor who is very famous in the Society, being William the Lucky. I think if you are friendly towards the peerage, they will act in kind

towards you.

I suppose it also helped that Hrölf and Madelaine were members of the peerage.

—Lord Hal the Archer [Lochac (West)]

SCA as GRAND THEATRE.

On formality, “royalty acting like royalty,” etc.—I am one of the strongest advocates around for SCA as Grand Theatre. One’s first royalty tends to make a lasting impression, and you carry those impressions with you for year. My first King was Aonghais Dubh, and no matter what else is said about the man, in his younger days he gave splendid Theatre. At the same time, I was considered unapproachable in the East for many years, because I didn’t know when to put the Grand Theatre away and just be me. I didn’t understand it at the time, but I do now, and it’s made a world of difference to my living in Meridies. I’ve come to like what I call “the Henry V method” of running around with no insignia on. (I have taken to referring to my beloved and battered countess’ coronet as “the business card.”) I make it a point of finding new folks and chatting with them and networking them to people that they’ll find an interest in. All they get is, “Hi, I’m Tam.” Later, when I’m dripping in glitz and The Business Card is on, they go, “You’re Countess Tamera?” in an unbelieving tone, like I should have three heads.

I’m sad that I have to “bury” my peerage on occasion in order for new people to be able to talk without fear, but I don’t know how much it can be changed.

—Tamera FitzGloucestre of the White Boar [Meridies]

I took the title for this new section from what Countess Tam wrote to go under “formality,” and I have a question for our assembled readers: What should be the balance of Truth and Theatre? What if a speech sounds good, but it isn’t true? What if someone gives the appearance of being a sincere, caring, compassionate person but really is a lying, cheating conscience-free human-substitute? Once when someone was formally accused of being extremely untruthful, the judgement came back 50/50 on the grounds that although the lying was indisputable, the physical and social appearances were good, and that was considered (by some, not all involved) to cancel out the problem.

Of course the ideal is someone whose honor is impeccable and who is Kenneth Branagh’s drama coach, and some of you have memories of SCA royalty or nobility who come close to this model, but personally I’d rather see someone who stammers and mumbles truth than a great orator with simulated warmth who would sell the whole kingdom for a beer.

—Ælfled of Duckford [Outlands]

VIGILS

I wish I’d had one. I got surprised at Pennsic XIII. It was a strange experience, because, for one thing, my lady wasn’t there. It was very hot, I was feeling bad, and I’d decided not to bother with my court garb—I changed my mind at the last minute. I really could have used a vigil as a way of focusing my very confused thoughts and emotions at the time. It took

me a very long time to achieve any coherent philosophy of the peerage. I could have used the input from the other peers.

I’m surprised that there seems to be a debate about restricting vigils to peers only. In the East, non-peers are generally not allowed at vigils. In fact, I as a Pelican still can’t get into most Knighthood vigils. The Civil Peerage generally encourages any peers to attend, but the Martial Peers are still an old-boy club when it comes to vigils. It’s annoying. It begs the question of whether the Peers Martial are “more equal” than the Peers Civil. To me, the peerage orders are all dual awards—there’s the Pel/Laurel/Kt, and then there’s the Peerage that goes with it. I have things to say to a candidate for the Peerage.

—Baron Steffan ap Cennydd [East]¹

In his commentary on the evils of peers-only vigils (TW 13:28), Istvan Kostka said it was silly to think that the peerage ceremony magically endowed one with wisdom to which only peers were privy.

I would be proud to be the president of the Istvan Kostka fan club. I think a few years down the road here he could be on everyone’s list of teachers and exemplars. I also think he’s wrong.

I resisted the urge to respond for two issues, but no one else has come forth with the answer.

Here is the knowledge which peers have and non-peers don’t have: Peers know how it feels to be a peer. New peers need to be prepared for this, and non-peers don’t have the concept.

Just as an experiment, I arranged to have Gunwaldt’s squire knighted so I could interview him.² Vagn was offered peerage February 13 at Estrella, a vigil was held that evening. [His elevation was set for April 3 at the Outlands Crown Tournament]. I talked with him February 21, and took notes furiously. “The peers talk to me more. They’re asking more questions. They really want to know what I have to say, rather than just finding out whether I have an opinion. They’re treating me like an equal, like the difference in an adult talking to a kid and an adult talking to another adult.

“Non peers are looking at me more in a leadership role. They give me some credibility. I went into the royal pavilion to get the thrones Saturday night. They all got quiet like an adult had walked into the room. The friendly banter ended—they got quiet, and listened to me. This was within hours of the peerage being offered, and these are not strangers, they’re the guys I fight with and talk to all the time.

“At the vigil, non-peers were *really* interested in what I thought, like I had read the book and they wanted to know what the book said.”

¹ I joined the SCA a week before Pennsic VI. I’m a life-long resident of the SCA’s first canton, The Towers, in Carolingia (Boston). My persona is that of an Anglo-Welsh baron, trained in the Law, in the early 1400’s. I’ve served as a Principal Herald, and as Cantonal Seneschal. I carry the name of Firebrand, Herald Extraordinary (read: Curmudgeon-at-Large). I hold the Pelican, Silver Crescent [EK service], Queen’s Order of Courtesy, Daystar [baronial service], Freedom of the Bridge [non-resident service], and a Court Baronage. I’ve been an SCA philosopher since I joined. Mundanely, I’m a Consultant Pharmacist.

² NO OF COURSE NOT; lighten up. He would have been offered peerage even if Istvan hadn’t written in *ThinkWell* (I think).

I asked him how he felt about all this, and he said, "Weird—kind of like the first day in a new school. It was awkward. People were treating me like a long-lost relative. I didn't fit it. It was like adolescence. I wasn't a kid, and not an adult."

We talked about the child/adult analogy a little more, and I asked whether he thought it would be better if people were to consciously try *not* to treat him (or other new peers) differently.

"No," he said, "You have to treat peers like peers. A police officer is a police officer, even when he's not on duty. Like doctors—they're on a different plane. Even the friends around me [were acting differently]. I don't think you *can* treat 'em the same."

I said, "Does it scare you to think that you can't go back?" and he answered fast and hard, "Yeah." The childhood analogy still worked. He said it felt as though the carefree days were over, and even if he were to turn down the peerage ultimately, the deed had been done, the finger had been put on him, and it would always be said, 'He could've been a peer and he turned it down.'

It's hard to explain the difference between having children and being childless (I tried recently). It's hard to describe sexual intercourse to someone who hasn't experienced it. It's hard to describe what it feels like to be married, except to other married people. The before and after differences in people following certain life-passages are profound and nearly beyond words. It's not that it's "secret," it's just that people who aren't there don't usually care, or wouldn't be able to understand if you tried to explain it.

I'm glad Istvan brought this up and that Vagn had the fresh experience I could lift for this issue. When I first became a peer I didn't put it into words, and so it's hard for me to remember how it felt. I'm enjoying my vicarious *ThinkWell* lives.

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

*Istvan received a copy of the item above
in early March, and sent this response:*

It's not hard for me to admit I'm wrong at the beginning of a discussion, but I must say it gets harder as the discussion goes on. So I'm swallowing my pride (don't praise me: this should be expected of anyone who consciously sticks his neck out), and will say that, thanks to Ælflæd, I now see the sense in peers-only vigils.

This is one of the things I was thinking about this weekend: that maybe I should spend some time outside of Calontir. I went out to eat with some friends the other night, two of whom had been at the peers retreat the weekend before,¹ and one of them mentioned that part of the discussion had been about the people who think that the way they play is the only right way. Well, this started me to thinking. As I see it, behind every discussion couched in generalities is something specific, so in the process of considering who might be "the problem," my comments about not accepting the peerage from a kingdom which had peers-only vigils came to mind. Ooops!

¹ There's more about the Peers' Retreat on page 17.

Thanks for publishing what Vagn said. Reading that, with your questions, and then reflecting on the few vigils I've visited, really made me see what you meant by "Peers know how it feels to be a peer." ...I guess I understand that I cannot understand.

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

While I did not stand a vigil, I have participated in several and coordinated one for one of my squires. Ælflæd's response to Istvan Kostka [TW 13:28-29] covered the subject very well. I believe the reception vs "initiation" description is the critical one. The vigil is *not* a congratulatory celebration. Most commonly, it is a sharing of thoughts on what becoming and being a peer means. Until one is actually in the position of becoming a peer, the meaning remains abstract rather than personal.

Perhaps the intent of the vigil needs to be better explained to the populace. Non-peers may have a place there, but they need to understand what the candidate wishes from the vigil before they participate.

—Anton Højen [West]²

When I was offered admittance to the Order of the Pelican (March XXVI), I did not desire a vigil. I believe that in period, a vigil was for a candidate to pray and reflect on his upcoming responsibilities. The well-wishers spoke with him either before or after, and the "wisdom of the ages" came from his sponsor, his knight (if different from his sponsor), and his confessor.

In my case, many of the Pelicans had been my close friends for a number of years. I felt I knew their views on being a Pelican and on being a peer in general. Besides, if they had things to tell me, there are *much* more reasonable times than the middle of the night. (I had two children, 6 and 3 years old.) For knighthood, there is re-creation to consider, but wouldn't it then be more appropriate for a vigil to be a time for *solitary* contemplation?

—Æthelyan of Moondragon [Ansteorra]

I was elevated to Laurel long before any of the peerage orders in Meridies did vigils. I did a pilgrimage instead, many years later. When Ædward and I went to Chartres cathedral in France, I took along the bbliaut that I had made based on the west front statues of the cathedral. I put it on and posed in front of one of the statues. Then, at Ædward's urging, I went inside and walked around the outer aisles in garb, thinking of what it would have really been like to have been Margala walking there in her time.

—Mistress Margala of Dovedale [Meridies]³

² I'm Anton Højen and I've been in the SCA since 1978. I began in the Barony of Loch Salann in Atenveldt (where I first met our esteemed editor), and for the past ten years have resided in the Barony of Fett Burg in the West. I am a Knight, a Pelican and Court Baron among other things. I have served part or full time in a variety of offices but I learned the value of saying "no" relatively early in my "career."

³ I am Mistress Margala of Dovedale, a Laurel in Meridies, founding baroness of Bryn Madoc, and ladywife to Master Ædward of Glastonburh, KSCA, etc. I have been a member of the SCA since 1976. My persona is a 12th-13th c. Norman woman. I am an embroider, costumer, off-loom weaver, bead-maker (w/polyform clay), field herald, illuminator, and

RELIGION

I find it a unique experience to be a pagan playing at being a Christian. Since my persona is Tudor, I would have definitely been in the Christian tradition, though Catholic or Anglican would have depended on who was ruling England at the time. I find the studies of other religions quite a fascinating pursuit, and I have no objections to learning about them so long as it isn't pushed down my throat. I am very careful to leave behind any item of jewelry that would have gotten me burned in Dorren's time; for me, it's part of creating the mystique and atmosphere more than some sort of personal statement that I'm Christian while I'm in the SCA. As much as I enjoy the SCA, my reality check tells me that Dorren is a character I step in and out of.

I have found a great majority of the people I meet are quite tolerant of non-overt religion. I think most people try to be sensitive to others who may not share their views. Personally, I'm not thrilled with the hordes of "witches" parading around; not only is it not particularly medieval, but it's like deciding to be a radical groups that just wants to live alternatively in peace...occupying one square city block in the process. (Sorry, obscure reference to the MOVE bombing in Philadelphia in the mid 80's.) Many things that we do would not have been properly accepted in the Middle Ages, but I hope, as a real-life pagan, I have the right to say I find "witches" objectionable.

—Mistress Dorren of Ashwell [East]¹

I have a Christian religious persona, and I have only very rarely met with what I could legitimately call anti-religious bias. I have sung religious songs, written research papers on religious topics, done embroidery with religious themes, taught classes on religious subjects, made subtleties with religious themes, and no one ever implied that any of these were the wrong thing to do. People sometimes get up the courage to ask me why I chose the persona of a nun, but no one has ever told me they didn't think I should be one.

There was a long discussion recently on the Rialto about religion in the SCA, and I said basically the same thing there. The point is that everything I've done has been very much within the letter of Corpora. No one was ever forced to listen to the songs, read the papers, look at the embroidery, etc., and none of these things were done as official parts of an event (one might quibble about the classes, which were announced as all classes are, but no one went to them who didn't want to be there). I think anyone who is interested in

occasionally a madrigal singer. My current office is chronicler of Bryn Madoc, editor/publisher of *The Standing Stone* for the barony. I am otherwise known as Margaret Dowdle Head, a Computer Graphics Artist (read graphic designer/artist) at the University of Georgia. Hobbies include photography/videography at SCA events; interests include space exploration, science fiction, and a certain rock'n'roll band from the lands we know as Caid.

¹ I am Mistress Dorren of Ashwell, Laurel in calligraphy and illumination, Kingdom service and arts awards. None of that really matters to me anymore, but some people find it excruciatingly important. I live in the East Kingdom, and have never lived anywhere else, though I have visited Atlantia occasionally. I've been a peer for less than three years (I think) and spend most of my time trying to be an ordinary, garden-variety Scadian...that is, 'til someone recognizes me!

religion and interested in the SCA can get their medieval religious fix the same way, and I, at least, find all these things perfectly satisfying. It would be nice (from my point of view) to have religious vigils and knightings and coronations and so on, but my purpose in the SCA is to have fun—not to upset people. I realize that what I feel would bring a deeper meaning to everything we do would upset some people very much indeed.

Mundanely my religion is also very important to me, and as Kirk FitzDavid pointed out, both the Church and the SCA take a lot of time and money if you want them to. When I took up the office of Chatelaine I had to give up singing in my church's choir, since our business meetings are the same night as choir practice, and I couldn't always tell which mass I would be able to go to. Newcomers need me at odd times, too, and it's best to be as available as possible. I do not, however, feel like I'm giving God short shrift (most of the time these days it's no shrift, but that's another story...) You can serve God anywhere, and there's certainly plenty of scope for service in the SCA. Sure I feel guilty about spending more money and time on the SCA than on the Church and recognized charities, but in the Church there are all kinds of people who can do exactly what I would be doing. In my small shire, I feel that I am far more necessary than I would be to my local church.

—Sister Kate [Caid]²

THE SCA AS RELIGION

SCA AS Religion!! I'm going to have to pray about this.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

Not for me, no thanks. For me, the SCA may form an extended family, but a religious community—no.

—Mistress Margala of Dovedale [Meridies]

This topic gives me the willies.

—John the Bearkiller [Meridies]

Me? I'm an apostate skier. (When I was MUCH younger, I used to answer questions about my religious preference by saying "I ski on weekends.")

—Kevin Perigrynn [West]

...THEREFORE, RAY CHARLES IS GOD

Hrolf Herjolfssen's thoughtful and articulate letter in *TW* #14 unfortunately contains a flawed syllogism. It goes like this: "All religions explain evil, define an ethos, provide a sense of belonging, and believe they can produce a better world; the SCA does these things; therefore the SCA is a religion." This is like saying "Bats fly, regulate their body temperatures internally, and sometimes eat fruit; budgies do these things; therefore budgies are bats." The fact that they

² I am Sor María Catalina de la Encarnación, usually called Sister Kate. My persona is that of a 16th century Spanish Carmelite nun; within the SCA I serve as the Chatelaine of the Shire of Darach in Caid; mundanely I work for an academic publisher. I spent my first SCA years in Meridies, which is why I refer to it often.

do some of the same things doesn't mean they're the same animal.

A religion can explain evil, etc. because it always contains at least a rudimentary *philosophy*, a set of principles for the conduct of human life. But a philosophy can exist independent of, or even in opposition to religion and still do just as good a job at all these things as religious philosophies. Examples include Humanism, Objectivism and Communitarianism. These philosophies are properly classified as just that—secular philosophies. Calling them “religions” is factually incorrect because religions by definition involve more than philosophy.

What religions have that secular philosophies lack is *theism*, which I must point out is *not* defined as “an explanation of evil” (Herjolfssen, TW #14), but as “belief in the existence of a god or gods” (*Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*). Widen the definition to include *any* belief in the supernatural and the term “religion” can indeed encompass Buddhism and many Greens. However it still will not apply to Marxism, football clubs or the SCA (if anyone out there actually believes that “the Dream” is a deity or supernatural force, I'd advise them to seek counseling and avoid operating heavy machinery). Describing these belief systems as “atheistic religions” is like describing budgies as hairless, feathered, egg-laying bats.

—Cadfan ap Morgan Godrudd [Ansteorra]

Could the SCA qualify as a religion if *ThinkWell* readers got together once in a while and held a tournament to choose a god for six months?

No, not a tournament. An essay contest. NO, an arts competition! Bardic!!

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

I found myself agreeing with Kirk FitzDavid's thoughts on religion in #14 but I was very disconcerted by Susannah Griffon's and Hrolf Herjolfssen's conjecture on the SCA as religion. I am not religious, but the letters made me very uncomfortable. I believe they are blurring the distinction between the social/cultural aspects of religion and the faith or belief in an absolute (whether that absolute be a divine being or a cosmic reason and order to existence). The social/cultural aspects are generally beneficial, but by themselves they are not religion. The SCA has many of these aspects and provides a context for our members that may either supplement the support their religion provides, or give us a secure (and beneficial) social context. It does not provide an “absolute” to comfort and guide us in loneliness or despair.

While the concept is stimulating as a discussion, it is a strong case for Ælflæd's “honeymoon” for newcomers. I would prefer a newbe had a firm grounding in what the SCA mainstream is before they ran into an esoteric discussion that could send them screaming into the night over cultists.

—Sir Antøn Hojen [West]

Maybe the SCA makes a good religion-substitute for “secular humanists,” though, because the idea that all people are basically good is appealing in our re-creations. If we have no mechanisms in our “society” to threaten bad people with

damnation (hardly even courts of chivalry, let alone fiery pits), then it might feel better to think they will eventually achieve their potential and become the fine and honorable humans we all are at heart (per secular humanism).

For atheists, agnostics and their ilk, the SCA can provide certain aspects of religion / church / religiosity that they were missing.

If a couple or three people are “using the SCA as a religion” (or as a church-substitute), should we feel guilty? Try to get them to stop? Not worry about it? Some people use 12-step recovery programs (such as Alcoholics Anonymous) as church-substitute, without much guilt and without many outside complaints, since the thought seems to be that if they weren't at AA they might be at a bar (and then driving around afterwards). If we look at our situation that way, it might look better. If the SCA had never existed, there might be many of us who would have become involved with churches to satisfy our urges for service, ceremony, community, moral guidelines, etc. There are as many (or more) who would not have, though, but would be off being listless immoral troublesome elements of Society, without the goals of chivalry and the feeling of a community with a purpose which the SCA provides.

I wonder if we could get any federal funding from the democrats for this.¹

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

“TWO LIVES TO LIVE”

Anne, more than you use is too much. What do you *really need*? If you're going to ask that, SCA goes by the wayside pretty soon, doesn't it?

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

How much are you reasonably going to use? If the deep forest green cloak is going to spend 90% of its life in the closet, then you probably *don't* need it. On the other hand, if both cloaks are going to see a reasonable amount of use, then I see nothing wrong with owning two of them. It's certainly nice to have another dry/warm/cool/clean/just plain different outfit to change into at a camping event. And if you have a few extra bits of SCA gear available, then you can use it as loaners when introducing new members to the Society. After all, isn't the point of conspicuous consumption to be conspicuous?

—Tivar Moondragon [Ansteorra]

In response to Anne of the Wild Meadows wondering how vegans reconcile their refusal to eat animal foods and/or wear animal products in the SCA—do not assume that vegetarianism isn't period. The Cathars, a religious group of 12-13th century Southern France and Northern Spain, were vegetarians. I do not know if they wore animal products; it would not surprise me to learn they did not. Anyone wanting more information on this interesting sect should read Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millenium: Revolutionary*

¹ Apologies to non-Americans in the audience for U.S. comments. Apologies to Ciriadoc for tax jokes. If anyone else is offended, acquire an existence.

Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages. I must admit I have not yet read it myself; my information on the Cathars comes from a man in our barony who is working toward a doctorate in medieval history, and he recommended Cohn's book, which he called: "a fascinating study of some very unusual beliefs."

—Lady Josceline Levesque [Middle]

Honest, Hrolf, I'm *not* picking on you, but I have to comment on one more thing in your letter (TW #14). You describe life outside the SCA as "value free," and say that many people join the Society to "give meaning" to a "bland existence." In America, at least, the problem isn't a lack of values but an overwhelming glut of often contradictory values from which you must assemble a personal philosophy—if you don't decide to chuck it all and build one from scratch. Whichever you choose to do, you'll be in for a lot of hard work; it's not surprising, then, that many people with an aversion to same either give up or never start, wrapping their intellectual laziness in the flag of self-righteous *anomie*. The SCA (again, I speak only of America) does seem to attract more than its share of such types, but I hardly think we're the better for it.

I've found that the people who contribute the most to and get the most out of the SCA are those who, at the time they joined, already had a fairly well-defined meaning for their existence and a set of values consistent with that meaning. These people regard the Society as an adjunct to, and not a substitute for "mundane" (i.e., real) life. They tend to do more, enjoy it more, and get into less trouble than those who just use the SCA for "fast, temporary relief from minor existential pain."

—Cadfan ap Morgan [Ansteorra]

On the one hand, it is hypocritical to abandon one's modern beliefs for the sake of convenience when playing SCA. On the other hand, though I get rather annoyed by those zealots who insist that the SCA adopt, or make extraordinary allowances for, their "pet cause." If I announce in *Pikestaff* that the feast for my event consists of a spit-roasted ox, the vegetarians can kindly provide their own tofu. I see no reason to use only free-range eggs as one lady once chastised Eastern cooks for not doing. I see no reason to allow same-sex consorts on the basis of "fairness" to the Blue Feather folks, as some have argued. I recall an occasion when I referred to local heraldic commenting groups as "confraternities" and got flame-broiled by a feminist who was outraged at the sexist term. Get a life!

—Baron Steffan ap Cennydd [East]

TOASTS

In the East, it is pretty much still as Keilyn remembers. During Desert Storm, one King decreed that the first toast should be to the forces fighting on Crusade, which I thought was a really nice touch.

—Mistress Dorren of Ashwell [East]

I love, and absolutely agree with, Robin of Gilwell's comment. When solemn custom and tradition are broken in

good chivalric cause, it *does* add strength to the action.

—Kevin Perigryne [West]

COMMITMENT or something

Ælflæd says she has thought sometimes that because she has spent a lot of time on the group (which undoubtedly translates to "worked very hard for the group," but she is too modest to say it that way), the group ought to treat her better, but "it doesn't always work that way." Ain't that the truth.

I can hardly complain about the way my group treats me; I can always depend on getting help with whatever I need whenever I need it, and the people here (Darachshire, Caid) have been friendly, welcoming, and enthusiastic towards me and with me from day one. But I gradually learned, as does everyone in every group, who does the work here and who doesn't. It's very hard to resign yourself to the fact that in your group there are people with immense talents that could be put to wonderful uses, but for one reason or another that talent is going to go to waste, and there is nothing you can do about it. To accept people for what they are willing to do instead of what I know they could do has been one of the hardest lessons I've ever had to learn. It will probably take the rest of my life to finish it.

—Sister Kate [Caid]

HOSPITALITY

One form of hospitality which was very important in my becoming a part of the SCA was the general expectation that a number of us would travel to out-of-town events. I went in other people's cars (offering some gas money) and could not have gone without them.

The people who never get out of their home group, no matter how well-developed that groups might be, have a sadly limited understanding of the Society.

—Lars Vilhjalmsen [Calontir]

I took the office of *chatelaine* because I had such a positive experience when I first joined that I wanted to pass that on to other new folks. Interested parties trickle in at about one or two a week, on average, and mostly I can keep up with them (this barony is pretty small).

Her Excellency Siobhan O'Riordan of Atlantia mentioned her concern about new people coming in and drifting away again. This happens in South Downs too. I try to make a small, but not obnoxious, fuss over newcomers and make them aware of various activities in the barony. It's either going to take, or it isn't. You can't force people to be interested (just ask my family members). But no one ever gets ignored, if I have anything to say about it (which I do). If they are really interested, they'll stick around.

—Kytte Meliora Stevenson [Meridies]¹

¹ My name is Kytte Meliora Stevenson. I joined the SCA in the Summer of 1990. I live in the Barony of the South Downs, in the fair Kingdom of Meridies. I am currently the baronial *chatelaine*, a member of the

Re: Baroness Siobhan's comments in #13: Believe me, Siobhan, Lochmere isn't doing anything wrong, nor are you! I met you under adverse conditions (mine, not yours) at 25th,¹ and was bowled over by your wit and grace. Our correspondence has been a blessing in my life! And never more than when it led to my visit last year. It was a relatively small event, a dance workshop I believe, but no less fun for being small. Lochmere was welcoming and friendly from when I walked in the door. I had just received a grant-level arts award for which there is no equivalent in Atlantia, so they treated me like I can only imagine they would treat a Laurel. I was asked to assist in judging a costume contest, and was seated at high table (an honor I've certainly never received in Ansteorra)! It was great fun. If Lochmere treats newcomers as well, then attracting and keeping newcomers should be easy!

I've been hospitaler for my barony. I've seen the stupid, the curious, the scoffer/sarcastic, and the ignorant. The stupid never quite get it, no matter how hard you try. The curious will pass by (or through) just like they do at disasters or any gathering. The scoffer/sarcastic just want to find some reason to look down at you. However, the ignorant come to learn—most stay to have fun while they are doing so. The trick is to discern which is which!

—Sagra ál Khudsi [Ansteorra]²

Teresa, it was only a THIRD-floor walk-up (from the front). Okay, four floors if you count the laundry room...

Ælflæd wants to know about long innocent early years? I had them. I met the SCA at a fantasy con in Memphis, and Bearkiller drove me to my first fighter practice. I came into the barony after the dust had settled behind a major crisis, and things were as quiet and peaceful as things ever get until just after I left, years later. The reigns of all the kings and queens I remember were good ones, with only one serious situation that I was aware of. I made better friends in those first years and met more people that I could greatly respect than in all the years of my life up to that point. I took no offices, had no concept of politics, and enjoyed myself greatly. I did a little work here and there, but that was part of the fun.

Having no basis for comparison, I have no idea if this was a necessity to my extended love affair with the SCA; it could be that if I had jumped in and taken a major office and autocratted a major event like a friend of mine did in her first year, I'd be just as happy with the SCA as she is now (she's pretty happy).

—Sister Kate [Caid]

Chorister's Guild, and a fighter. Until recently, I was the baronial artisan for calligraphy and illumination. Oh, and I'm also 30 years old, if that matters.

¹ 25th is TFYC, probably.

² I joined the SCA in 1980, got my AoA in 1982, my baronial service award (oak of the Steppes) in 1986, Sable Thistle in costuming in 1991, and Iris of Merit in 1992. I'm using a second persona—a Christian bedouin from outside of Jerusalem circa 1199—after evolving from an earlier Norman. My interests are costuming, cooking, embroidery, weaving, research, and fun. Outside the SCA, I am a 42-year-old contract technical writer. I've spent all of my SCA life in Ansteorra, and most of that in the Steppes (Dallas).

The following poem is about my "innocent years." It describes a time when I had been in the SCA about three years, written in honor of the king and queen who gave me my AoA, written about 3-4 years ago.

CYF & FINN

When first I met Cyf,
Was the day she was knighted,
I was told of her deeds,
Of the many wrongs righted.

When first I met Finn,
'Twas a Prince of renown
A great jolly man
With a fine golden crown.

From the Stargate to Namron,
And from Pennsic to Steppes,
I loved them and served them
On numerous trips.

I was no one, a squire,
Just a boy with a sword.
My counsel was nothing
But they made me lord.

Today I am noble,
A great lord and peer,
I knew nought of such things
In my nineteenth year

But for me there was magic,
A simple delight,
Just to bow to a king
Or to fall in a fight.

The royal largesse
Was a drink from a cup,
Or a smile from the Queen,
How it lifted me up!

And he gave me his gauntlet,
He called me his friend,
And this is an honor
That never will end.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

KNIGHTHOOD FOR EVERYONE

This Golem may be apparently dead, but I have had it indicated to me that some highly placed individuals intend to pursue this perfidious notion into the future. I ask those who, like me, perceive the idea of establishing a knighthood level for all peerages as an asinine concept keep a sharp ear to the ground.

The question has been asked if Master of Arms is such a shunned stepchild of Knighthood as it is is sometimes portrayed. Well, the corps of Masters of Arms in Ansteorra

are nobody to sneeze at. They are few (and dwindling), but highly respected.

Nonetheless, I point out two instances:

Long ago in my own kingdom, I was present when a king (who had not been a member of the SCA all that long at the time) offered the belt to a fighter. That man politely refused and requested Mastery. The King refused and closed his court on the field. Less than an hour later he reopened his court on the field, proffered the belt again, the request for Mastery was made and was acceded to that time.

In a nearby kingdom, Mastery had never been offered because it was ingenuously believed that any member of that kingdom wouldn't possibly refuse to swear fealty to the Crown. Nonetheless, a Master was finally made when his abilities could no longer be held to Grant-level recognition. I was there for that elevation and, I assure you, it was highly approved of by all in attendance.

These two examples demonstrate the extreme reticence of Crowns and Kingdoms to allow Mastery of Arms.

I hold that to make the other Peerages into Knighthoods and to offer Mastery to those who cannot or will not swear fealty is to subject those people to the same obstacles and prejudices that Mastery very undeservedly suffers from.

Mastery of Arms is sometimes perceived as a gesture of disrespect to the Crown. Nothing could be further from the truth, but people are seldom given the chance to prove it.

I cannot bring myself to swear fealty to every Thomas, Richard and Harry who wins the Crown. I also do not relish the idea of becoming thought of as a second-class Peer if I were to refuse Knighthood of the Pelican.

My ultimate horror would be if the Pelican were made a Knighthood exclusively and I were to be given a take-it-or-leave-it option.

I can only give one response to such a possibility: Beware the wrath of a cartoonist!

—William Blackfox [Ansteorra]

When I first received the TI that posed this question, I responded "Yes, they ought to be the same!" Since that time, the discussion here has caused me to change my mind. What attracted me to the idea in the first place was its attempt to smooth out an inequality—not in status, but in ceremony. The Order of the Pelican and the Order of the Laurel do not have the same rich ceremony attached to them that the Order of Chivalry has. They are equal in respect (in my eyes at least...), why aren't they equal in treatment? On reflection, however, I think that the answer is not to borrow the symbols and ceremony of knighthood indiscriminately. The answer is to make the ceremonies, symbols, etc., of the other Orders as elaborate and inspiring as the ceremonies and symbolism of the Chivalry. We are headed in that direction already—in theory all of the peerages are equal—but without the magical aura of "knighthood" that we have all absorbed from the day we first heard of King Arthur, the other Orders have to work harder to project that image of chivalric perfection that excites and inspires people.

On the other hand, I do support the idea of expanding the Chain of Fealty to all three orders of the Peerage. The oath of fealty that a Pelican or a Laurel swears is just as valid, just as binding, and just as heavy a burden as the oath of a Knight.

Anyone who makes such a commitment should be allowed some sort of symbol to demonstrate it. In the Known World, this symbol has been the Chain of Fealty. This may be a place where "separate but equal" is appropriate—if the chain is reserved for knights, then the other orders should create their own symbols.

—Simon d'Este of Mantua [West]

I don't know about Laurels, but maybe Pelicans could wear a metal ankle band...

—Ælfælð, the Obnoxious, the Unbanded

EQUALITY OF PEERAGES

One of the things I most treasured when first I joined the SCA was a riddle: "What do you call the last person left sweeping out the hall (or scrubbing pots) after an event?" "Your Majesty."

As the SCA has grown, there are more people to do these jobs, but I think it is a small tragedy that the highest nobility we have are no longer setting this example. *Please note* that I am not blaming this solely on the royalty and royal peers. I am a duchess with a Laurel for cooking; some of my best times at events have been in kitchens. But there have been times when people have all but thrown me out of the kitchen, on the grounds that princesses, queens, and duchesses have no business being in there. I could have bullied people into letting me stay, but that wouldn't have been gracious either.

I guess it's another of those conundrums—how do peers act like peers and help nonpeers feel the illusion without getting locked out of the things we joined the SCA to do? (I hope this last doesn't sound like I'm whining; I don't mean to pretend that it's more a burden than a privilege. There aren't more problems for peers, just different ones.)

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

The topic of who cleans up nowadays came up at the discussion at Fool's War.¹ Perhaps, it was said, cleaning is left for newer members who otherwise would have nothing helpful to do (i.e. that there are more people willing and so those who *do* have something else to do are encouraged to go do it), and maybe it's not as fun to clean up after 300 strangers as it is to clean up after 50 close friends. It may just be another severe perception problem, and difference in the way things were years ago (or are now in smaller groups) and the way they are now (or are in larger groups).

—Ælfælð of Duckford [Outlands]

KINGDOM DIFFERENCES

To Kirk: The utopia I grew up in was not Calontir, you're right. I meant the Society as a whole, in its ideal form, local disappointments notwithstanding.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

¹ I went to Fool's War in Meridies on Easter weekend. It was a big thrill. I had never been to Meridies. I got to go to Teresa's discussion. I met people I had sort-of-known for years. Melisande was there, too, but she wrote this before Fool's War and I wrote just a minute ago.

I just got back from my first Estrella. Being from the East, I'm used to the Oriental Rite attitude. It's funny, Oriental Rite is usually more authenticist. (As Master John ap Griffin once said, we got all those rules from the West, but the difference was, *we actually believed 'em.*) In one matter, though the Occidentals are *far* more formal. My tin hat got bowed to *all the time!* That never happens here, except at Pennsic, and I suspect it's still Occidentals that do it. Maybe it's our "Independent Yankee" and New York "Yo, ya talkin' ta me?" heritage. It kinda weirded me out (but I loved it!)

—Baron Steffan ap Cennydd [East]

Well, I've been visiting in the Midrealm, the Outlands, Ansteorra, Atlantia and Pennsic. Mostly, everyone from everywhere has been pretty darn nice, despite regional differences [e.g. Atlantia is more formal than Meridies, the Outlands has better Pennsic parties (no offense), and *everybody* hits harder than we do]. We all still appear to be playing the same delightful game. And for the record, I really, *really* like living in Meridies, but the Knowne Worlde would be a lot less interesting if all the kingdoms were exactly alike.

—Kytte Meliora Stevenson [Meridies]

To the question of whether the people in the Midrealm feel their Eastern heritage: I believe many of us do. When I was a newcomer (in A.S. XXII) hearing stories of the Pennsic War, I was told by a lady in our barony that "The Midrealm plays King Arthur and his knights, the East Kingdom plays the Borgias...and the Tuchux play Conan." On the other hand, Pennsic t-shirts with the motto: "Annual enemies, eternal friends" abound. I believe that the Pennsic war does help to maintain our historic ties with the Eastern Kingdom, and despite the "King Arthur vs. the Borgias" attitude, I am aware that we have more in common with the "Eastern Rite" than with any of the Western kingdoms.

—Lady Josceline Levesque [Middle]

Your description of the origin of Meridies and Trimaris makes it sound as though they were originally part of Atenveldt. As king of the Middle, I transferred a portion of what is now western Meridies, including the New Orleans area, from the Middle to Atenveldt in response to the desires of its inhabitants. A year or two later the Board, without the knowledge or consent of the Eastern Crown, transferred the rest of what is now Meridies and Trimaris from the East to Atenveldt. Some of present-day Meridies west of the Mississippi may originally have been Aten territory, but Trimaris and almost all of Meridies belonged to the Middle and the East before they were part of Atenveldt.

All of this, of course, is a question of sovereignty not of influence. One reason the territory ended up as part of Atenveldt was that some of its inhabitants felt closer ties to Atenveldt than to the kingdoms they were officially part of, and it may well be that Aten influence is responsible for many features of the southeastern kingdoms.

So far as the "Eastern Rite" kingdoms are concerned, I do not think the East had any significant influence on the Middle prior to Pennsic I. With the exception of Baroness Signe, who

had, I believe, been active in the East and perhaps also the West prior to the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, I cannot think of any important figures of the first few years who had come from the East, nor was there much contact. Insofar as we got our ideas of what we were supposed to be doing from anywhere else in the Society, it was from the Handbook of the Current Middle Ages, which was written in the West. I spent a few days in the West between winning our coronet tournament and being crowned King of the new kingdom and was instructed by Master Edwin Bersark; the ideas I brought back from that trip would have been the major outside influence on Middle Kingdom fighting style in the early years.

On the general subject of Eastern/Western differences, I would suggest that there may have been a significant political difference between the West and Atenveldt on the one hand and the East and Middle on the other, in the early years. My impression was that, in both the West and Atenveldt, activity was concentrated in the central area of the kingdom to a degree that was never true in the Middle and ceased to be true in the East after the first two or three years. In this respect I think that Meridies, despite the dominant role of South Downs, is and was more like the East and Middle.

—Cariadoc of the Bow [Middle]

Most of the ceremony Meridies uses seems to come from Aten and the Middle. Atenveldt was the parent figure and the Mid-Realm played a good bit with us in our formative years. In terms of traditions, the one that sets us off from most kingdoms is our habit of killing off the Crown when their reign is done. I guess we do this so that it makes sense that the heirs become the next Crown. I mean, one minute you're king and queen wielding supreme power and the next you're handing it over to some upstarts. Nah! It also makes for great theatre. I myself have been mauled by a dancing bear, ploughed into the ground for a good harvest, and will soon die at the hands of heartless brigands. Some of the deaths were solemn and some were not. (Once, a giant wolf jumped out of a bag and killed the Crown—the bag had been given as a gift by disgruntled nobles.)

There is a slight hitch when the dead ex-king and queen waltz into court for their county/ducal coronets and the Order of the Rose. Oh well, one can't have everything. Still, we wouldn't have it any other way. And I'm sure the other kingdoms find it a quaint and slightly repugnant habit.

—John the Bearkiller [Meridies]

Meridies may have sprung from the loins of Atenveldt, but I suspect that you'd have to dig pretty deeply to find the common threads today (probably the vestiges of how the Kingdom Herald's office is organized, and other such organizational frameworks...). If it is true that we are hardly Eastern Rite, so is it also true that we are only vestigially the tad we were when we wandered off All Those Years Ago.

—Edward of Glastonburh [Meridies]

Hey, it wasn't that long ago—it was the year I joined! (oh, yeah. I guess it was a little while back...)

—Ælfled of Duckford [Outlands]

I was always taught that our institutions were different from the East. The only history I know of the Early Days was that the Eastern presence at our first crown tourney consisted of one person; and thereafter it was Cariadoc's show.

The Midrealm's reputation is for being slow—in everything. "Jurassic" was a term I once heard applied to our way of doing things. We are looked upon as a very bureaucratic realm where Channels Must Be Observed! and so we are. Still, I like to think we're just circumspect and safety-conscious. All in all, I think I prefer that emphasis. Better a good decision slowly than a poor one quickly.

—Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]

One of the things that makes life in the Far West (Japan/Korea/Guam) interesting is the fact that we have only a few "permanent residents." Virtually all of our members are military personnel/dependents/civilians attached to the military and here on limited tours. They stay for two or three years, and then they go away. (My apologies to the brave few who have come to Japan on their own.) This means that, in spite of the fact that we are part of the Kingdom of the West, many of our customs and practices are from the Midrealm, Meridies, Atenveldt, Caid...you get the idea. The personality and customs of each individual group here change constantly, as the makeup and history of the membership changes. In a lot of ways this is great—where else could we be exposed to so much of the diversity of the Known World in so little time? (Pennsic, I guess...). I do worry about it a little, however. Many of our members have encountered the SCA for the first time HERE, and we are sending them back to the Known World as neither fish nor fowl. Are we scarring them for life? Creating strange rumors about how things in the West Kingdom really are? (Most of our members can't even travel 1000 miles to Tokyo for a baronial coronet tournament, much less 7000 miles to San Francisco—they have never even seen a West Kingdom event.)

—Simon d'Este of Mantua [West]¹

The culture shock when I moved from Meridies to Caid was severe. Caid can be friendly, welcoming, colorful, active, and there are more fun things to do here than any one person can get to in a lifetime, but it ain't Meridies. When I went to my first shire business meeting and heard people talking about working a food booth at a street fair to raise money for the group, I was rather put off: it seemed so blatantly mercenary. It took a while before I realized that things had to be that

¹ My lady (Chryse Raptis) and I have been SCA hangers on for many years in northern Atlantia, but we first became active in the Society when we moved to the Canton of Chuzan in the Palantine Barony of the Far West, Kingdom of the West (Okinawa, Japan). Out here, there really isn't much room for people who just want to attend events and have fun. We have roughly 20 to 40 active members, and the nearest branch of the SCA is over 1100 sea miles away in Tokyo (the Canton of HavBjorn). If we want to have an event—and we DO, there isn't much to do on a small island like Okinawa—we have to put it on for ourselves. All of our members end up working on every event. Most of our members here are military (my lady and I are exceptions—we are civilian computer types) and we have had members here from every kingdom in the Known World. Because of this I am very interested in much of the discussion you publish about differences between kingdoms—we have had first hand experience with the problems that can arise. My lady serves as baronial seneschal, and I am both canton and baronial exchequer.

way—it is impossible to have one event pay for the next (as is done in Meridies) when you have no weekend events you can charge a lot for.

I miss regular weekend events. I've made a lot of friends here, but it's so much easier when you meet someone in the morning and know you'll have all evening to talk to and get to know them. Spending all Friday night packing the cooler and the car to drive through nasty traffic to a one-day event just to repack everything a few hours later and drive back home through nasty traffic still doesn't seem worth it to me in most cases. Thanks to this, my SCA life has taken a different turn. Focusing on and working for and with my own shire has proved very rewarding, and I might never have done it had Caid been exactly like Meridies.

—Sister Kate [Caid]

TRAVEL

The Far West, I believe, is physically the largest barony in the Known World. (If I'm mistaken, let me know.) The two *closest* branches (Tokyo and Misawa, Japan) are 12 hours of driving time apart. Okinawa, Korea, and Guam are all *at least* a thousand miles from each other and from Tokyo. When you add in some of the minor holdings (Tinian, Truk, Singapore, and Diego Garcia—places where we have members but no active branch), the Barony of the Far West stretches 8000 miles east to west and 4000 miles north to south. We still get together occasionally and even have Baronial events with most of our branches represented. It is all a matter of what you consider local, I guess.

—Simon d'Este of Mantua [West]

I thought I might add to the comments about travelling time to events, as I have recently arrived back from a trip to mainland Australia. The reason for this trip was to be in Stormhold (Melbourne) for the Twelfth Night Investiture.

To travel to mainland events by car it takes at least two days as we have to ship cars across Bass Strait which separates Tasmania from the rest of Australia. It only takes a number of hours (usually 2-3) to fly from Hobart to most of the mainland capital cities.

The one really enjoyable thing about travelling was the hospitality offered by various good gentles. Now that that I am home again, I will certainly try to help travellers to this region.

[and, from an earlier letter:]

Over the past few years I have noticed an expansion and maturation of this Shire, whilst retaining our unique friendliness to outsiders from other parts of Lochac, the Kingdom of the West and other Kingdoms. We have now passed the stage where we retain a shire's attitudes and have inherited the attitudes of a barony. For over two years we have been discussing the move towards barony status, and in July at the Brass Monkey War, this will (hopefully) be attained.

—Lord Hal the Archer [Lochac (West)]²

² I joined the SCA three and a half years ago when I met two people on the campus of the University of Tasmania and started talking about medieval history after a few mundane things. The next weekend I was

Tasmania! What a great idea! Oops! Just since I started this paragraph I have failed yet again to win the state lottery. Better luck next time.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

TIME LIMITS ON BARONS

This position appears to have a built-in limiter, not of time, but of patience. That covers the personal patience of the person(s) in the position and the patience of the populace. Their position is based on "influence" not "power." Those who recognize this have productive and fun terms, be they one year or twelve. As a member of the populace, I want my baron/ess to be someone I am proud of, regardless of whether I like them. Those who try to use "power" fall flat, and make the barony look bad.

—Saqrá ál Khudsi [Ansteorra]

I¹ don't think this is such a great idea. I realize that this would take care of the occasional barons/baronesses who refuse to take a break when they really should. But I agree with Master Ædward of Glastonburh that it would also periodically "fix" things that are not broken and which work just fine.

Even if we had a time limit with the option to renew, I still think this would put the idea into the heads of the populace that they should pick(?) a new baron or baroness, even if the one they have is doing well.

—Kytte Meliora Stevenson [Meridies]

What if a) a barony was active enough, b) it had a good ruling noble, c) the noble wasn't burnt out or even close, d) he was doing a good job, e) there was no reasonable successor, but f) his time was up?

—Æthelyan of Moondragon [Ansteorra]

Few ideas seriously considered by the Society strike me as less desirable than Knighthoods for all Orders of Peerage. However, limited terms and regular votes of confidence for barons and baronesses both make the grade.

The Baronial throne is intended to be a symbol everyone can champion and to provide an island of sanity and stability in the chaotic maelstrom that many Society branches are. Ruling the throne vacant every few years negates the second purpose, and having the populace constantly considering removing the Baron(ess) by vote of confidence negates the first. Once again, the Society has approximately a quarter-century of working well. Let us consider carefully before we make such a sweeping change.

—Orrick of Romney [Caid]

down at the Solar, which is Hrölf and Madelaine's house in Kingston, Tasmania, Australia. And from there on in I was hooked like a fish on a line.

Lord Hal the Archer is an archer in service of Lord Talbot during the War of the Roses in England. Currently he serves as Lists Officer in the Shire of Ynys Fawr. Paul Saunders is an University Student in the Department of Surveying, who is doing a year's work experience with the Tasmanian Department of Environment and Planning.

¹ in my infinite 2-1/2 year wisdom

The Barony of Bryn Madoc has no set term limits. The founding baron and baroness (Master Ædward of Glastonburh and Mistress Margala of Dovedale) served for eight plus years. Sir Galan and I succeeded them and have ruled for four. At the outset, we planned to rule for a specific period of time (4 or 5 years) and then step down. In retrospect, I wish we had instituted (at least for our tenure) a periodic vote of confidence. I think it would have given the populace a sense of "input" or [God forbid] "empowerment" that typically does not come with our type of governance. It certainly would have removed any ambiguity we might have felt that our populace supported us. At most times they did. Our tenure has been dominated by internal peace and prosperity, but even so...one wonders...what they are thinking, really.

We have started the process of selecting our successors (in conjunction with our officers and the populace of the Barony). What we hope to achieve by the end of the process is: 1) successors selected in as [gulp!!] democratic a manner as possible, and 2) protocols that represent a "snapshot" of the process, so that when our successors step down, they have a process they can use or alter to meet the group's needs.

—Domenica Farnese [Meridies]²

I had read the letters regarding length of post for Barons, and it was especially thought provoking since Calafia just had its first Baronial change EVER. We did it democratically, which I understand is not the norm. The articles in TW did help me make a more enlightened choice, though, so it wasn't just a beauty contest.

—Maggie MacD [Caid]

When we were considering who should replace us, we went through a protracted discussion about "kingdom" participation versus "local" participation. It was our feeling that the Baron/ess is the communication line to the Crown, and so that person should be participating at both levels. A little heavier on the kingdom side is fine, as long as s/he has good contacts with those who are strong locals. We did recognize that there are those who are primarily involved at the kingdom level, and others who are strictly local.

—Morag Campbell of Glenbourne [An Tir]
former Baroness of Three Mountains

² Dominica Farnese is a late 15th Century Florentine who spends her time gardening, collecting art, running her estates, and plotting intrigue at the Medici courts.

In the SCA, I am the territorial Baroness of Bryn Madoc [Meridies], O.Pel., O.B.M., O.V.O. My interests range from heraldry, period gardening, costuming and dance to SCA fencing and basketmaking.

In the mundane world, I am a Landscape Architect working at an electric cooperative utility in Georgia doing environmental planning and engineering.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS of NEW BARON/ESS

As far as first impressions go, I like having a hat, being in the spotlight, the center of attention (more or less), and having the power to see my ideas made to be. Yes, I've already had decisions to make, and seen them carried out.

I liked it when people bowed to me, and called me "Your Excellency," at first, but by the end of the evening, it was getting sorta old. I guess I'll have to get used to it.

One of the things that bothers me is that when you win Crown Tourney, you have time to meet with the Crown, attend the meetings, sit court, etc., essentially learning how to be Crown yourselves, but between the announcement of our promotion and the time it occurred we received no "training" to speak of, save that of the advice of our friends who had either been Crown or Baron/ess. It's harder to do a job when you have little idea what's expected of you.

We've been told by many who attended our investiture that we looked very natural on the thrones. I assume that this is due to the sheer volume of reigns and such that we have been a part of as retinue. My outgoing personality translated into confident stage presence, although I've been told that it's bad manners to upstage the Crown (they're the 'stars of the show' after all...).

On the downside, being B+B is kinda like working retail, or in a restaurant. No matter who comes to talk to you, no matter how obnoxious, or unlikable, or in need of a shower, you have to be nice to them and talk to them. And the minute you put the hat on, you're everyone's best friend. People you've never heard of, never spoken to, or even seen, know you and your entire life's story, as if you're a TV character and they've seen all the episodes. Actually, to me this is not a new phenomenon, but when it used to happen I just chalked it up to having been drunk, and not remembered them. But other people (who don't drink) have told me the same thing.

Another drawback I've discovered is that you can't get up in the middle of court to go to the bathroom, or go outside during the feast when it's too warm inside. I've also found that, as much as I've always wanted to know what was being softly whispered and laughed about at the front of the hall during court, the jokes in the back of the room are funnier.

So much for first impressions after three days of being "Excellent." I'll write again, as things change.

—Cathyn Bluesword [Calontir]
Baron of Lonely Tower

My first impression of being a hat is that it is a really neat thing (with very interesting undertones). I found it fun to be bowed to, although this had already started after I got my Calon Lily (the GOA level arts award in Calontir). The number of people who knew me and my life story picked up—even though I'm quite sure I've never met some of these people.

The things that stick out most in my mind from the investiture are: Sitting in court and seeing someone new to the Society getting their Award of Arms was too cool. It was a huge slap in the face, too. To see their fear—it's a looonnnngg waayy uupp thaaat aisle—and the joy as the scroll is read, the tears—over an AoA, something I've had for

seven years and had forgotten how special it truly was—this was moving. The other thing I remember is Cathyn thanking people who were bowing to us as we left court.

Because I'm a noble now, my actions will affect more than just me and I know people will be watching for anything and everything. I know that as a human I will make mistakes, but I will endeavor to be a good person and a good noble, for surely if I am a good person the other won't be far behind.

—Jemira, Baroness of Lonely Tower [Calontir]

BARONS AND BARONESES

Thanks, O Baroness of Lochmere, for the outline/punchlist. We'll pass it (along with the baronial regalia) to our successor. I often think of our role as a combination of "ox caller" and "sin-eater," in that we act both as a cheering section for individuals and the group's efforts and as an emissary between parties with conflicts both inside and outside the group.

—Domenica Farnese, Baroness of Bryn Madoc [Meridies]

MERCHANTS

I agree with Johannes. We should outlaw the sale of all "junk," including books (since less than 1% are produced in period fashion), garb with non-period dyes or fabrics, music tapes or CDs, instruments with non-period strings, and other such things. Incidentally, it's called a "pentacle" when it's worn, as anybody who holds it sacred as a symbol of their faith could tell you.

—Michael of the Isles [East]

CALONTIR'S PEER'S RETREAT

In Calontir a meeting was held February 20, 1993, at a hotel/resort for the purpose of having whichever peers wanted to attend discussions on the following topics: "The benefits and injuries to the kingdom resulting from the growing households within the kingdom." That was the pre-lunch topic. After lunch: "The Proper consideration of 'mundane' characteristics in the consideration of peerage candidates." After that, the schedule said "Pool and Hot Tub Time, and Dinner," then "Evening Mingling & Impromptu Arguments" Other possible topics, listed at the end of the flyer, were "Which peerage for archery?" and "How do you become a peer without getting a big ego?"

Sir Lars sent the flyer, and this follow-up:

"I have enclosed the advance warning flyer for our recent Peers Retreat. I know the Midrealm has been curious about the concept, perhaps folks in other kingdoms are too. The discussion about households mostly agreed that compared to other kingdoms we have no problems at all, but some anecdotes were exchanged and everyone agreed to try to nip predictable problems in the bud. We did not discuss the 'mundane characteristics' issue, choosing rather to spend the afternoon arguing about peerage for archery. We did not think current archery practices warranted a peerage. The board's stand against a separate peerage was taken as absolute and

final. A Pelican for service to the kingdom in the organization and teaching of Archery? Yes. A Knighthood for an otherwise fully qualified heavy weapons fighter whose most lethal system is the bow? Yes. But for the expert practice of historically accurate target archery, construction of period equipment, and teaching of same, the Laurel."

*For the benefit of our readers, I called
Sir Lars and got further information:*

This was the fourth retreat. They used to be every other year. The first time the logistics were bad, and turnout was light. The heaviest turnout was 80% of the active peers. This time they had somewhat over half, but were light on Laurels. Maybe there would have been more if they hadn't just met last year. The King and Queen are there, and involved, and he said it wouldn't happen in a year that the king and queen weren't interested in having one. With these discussions, they're trying to get behind some of the underlying issues that are getting in the way of their considerations of candidates.

I asked whether it was in costume, and he said no—goofy t-shirts, and swim suits. He felt that the informal atmosphere and discussions were a good way of reaffirming the idea that they're all basically on the same side, and no one needs to get that upset about particular disagreements.

I commented on the advantage Calontir has in that they didn't begin their kingdom with a whole bunch of leftover peers (as opposed to the Outlands, which still hasn't doubled the number of peers it had when it became a kingdom nearly seven years ago). He said that at the time of their first retreat there were four knights in Calontir, and this year there are over thirty.

So there's an exotic tale for those outside Calontir—a day-long philosophical discussion at a resort with a pool and hot tubs.

—Ælflæd and Lars

LAURELS, PELICANS, SOMEBODY!

Pet peeve time: When is somebody going to recognize that Archery is an Art and that, aside from warfare, it is the only form of inter-kingdom competition that exists and therefore an (otherwise qualified) master level archer is deserving of a peerage?

—Kevin Perigrynn [West]

Atlantian Knighthood Discussions

For the past year or two the University of Atlantia has been sponsoring open discussions on the subject of knighthood in history and the SCA. A (usually) two hour period is set aside in one of the classrooms. A panel of knights gathers to answer questions about knighthood. The knights have spanned a range of junior to senior (in terms of years since being knighted), those who hold no other awards than their AoA to those who are Dukes, Laurels, and/or Pelicans. Several different "schools" of thought and training are usually represented. The panel has been moderated by myself, who is neither fighter nor peer; my main qualification is that I am able to keep the discussion on the subject and not let either panel

members or attendees run at the mouth. The idea is to be able to have frank, open discussion of what it means to be a knight, what knights seek in candidates for knighthood, and how the historical role of the knight agrees/conflicts with SCA practice.

These discussion panels have met with great success. Attendees are gaining a better knowledge of that peerage group as individuals and a corporate entity. Much of that which needed to be formulated into words is finding an outlet. No secrets are being revealed, but knowledge is being shared among people who would not normally encounter one another in discussion. New ideas are being exchanged and not just among fighters. Many people who are not fighters are coming to ask questions about the role of the fighter in the Society and how it affects our attitudes and public appearance. The knights who have participated have generally reacted enthusiastically and are willing to do this again. There is even some discussion that this type of forum could be good for the Laurels and Pelicans as well.

The trick seems to be in treating all the panel members as knights foremost, and the questions of the attendees with equal respect and interest.

—Lady Deirdre O'Siodhachain [Atlantia]

IS THERE EVER "TIME OUT"?

We're dealing with this in my mundane Ethics class, but it's been my experience that there is no such thing as time-out. The very rare exceptions are amongst very close friends, but one can never be 100% sure that everything said is kept confidential.

—Mistress Dorren of Ashwell [East]

PEERAGE

My old hippie-liberal high-school English teacher (and mentor) used to say "You can do absolutely anything. But you *do* have to accept the consequences. You can jump off a skyscraper, but if you do, you *will* have to hit the ground."

If you accept a peerage, you accept the responsibility of acting like a peer. You can't go to the event and decide "not to be a peer today." The peer's burden is that if he chooses to play, he has to play hard.

—Steffan ap Cennydd [East]

I hope people judge me by how I act as a peer, rather than what they've heard, or the fact that I am a peer. I think I've become more conscious in the last few years of how my actions will reflect upon how people view the peerage in general, and as a result, I have a more constant feeling that I'm on display. If anything, I think becoming a Laurel has prompted me to try to be more courteous, more thoughtful, to give better-considered suggestions and advice. Sometimes it has stopped me from taking action that I thought appropriate. In that instance, I think I was wrong to hold my tongue, but in general, a bit of introspection doesn't hurt, and may keep any number of others from being hurt by a careless comment.

—Mistress Dorren of Ashwell [East]

Istvan, I finally have an answer for you on why become (or be acknowledged) a Peer. As a Peer I function as a facilitator. I seldom have the opportunity to teach my crafts, but I often have a chance to point someone in a new direction in their work. It's the added responsibility that made me realize that I wasn't ready and I quickly worked to remedy that fact. I've also taken on a cause (quest?) to teach whatever I can to whomever asks (~~and sometimes even when they don't~~). That I see as every peer's job. Whatever their specialty, they should all be teaching (at least) peer qualities.

Accepting the accolade is (or should be) a natural extension of the path that you are on. As an artisan, in this society, one starts out doing neat stuff. Then someone else thinks that the stuff is neat too, and you teach them the techniques (fighting, crafts, how to run an event). Then you go beyond teaching one at a time and can teach on a grander scale, teaching them how to teach others, teaching others to live in this society. Woof, sounds like guru-speak. But isn't that what we're doing with squires, apprentices, and proteges? And aren't those elusive peer qualities a way of living?

I feel it's almost a responsibility to take the award. It's an opportunity to give back to the SCA some of what you've learned. The peerage needs all the different angles that it can get. How boring would it be to have one dream. Everyone only thinking in one direction. That's what makes us different from re-enactment groups. We're using all of our viewpoints to create something that's probably more real than if we followed a script. The diversity of attitude in the SCA, I believe, echoes the real medieval world better than if we had one dream.

Coming back to accepting peerages, if there isn't that diversity at the top, how can it be at the bottom? If I am called I will serve where serve I might. If not I'll keep on doing what I've been doing. My brain hurts. Usually I have years to get that stuff across to my apprentices. Tackling it in one gulp is rough.

--Master Ælfred Verrier [Middle]¹

Someone asked why so much of our discussion is devoted to the topic of peerage, and it occurred to me that while I can't speak for anyone else, I feel that the purpose of this life (the "real" one) is self-improvement, so why *shouldn't* we talk about it?

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

How does Gyrth's breakdown of Artist, Athlete, Analyst and Clue-Impaired (given that Athlete means one with a natural and unexamined talent) sort out when applied to the other two orders?²

—Kevin Perigryne [West]

part of an answer is on the next page—Lars on Laurels

¹ I'm a Laurel in Clay and Glass (AS XX). My first event was Pennsic IX. I've spent most of my SCA life in the Middle, spent six months in the East and four years in Atlantia. I'm also known (perhaps better known) as Massa A (still another Laurel from Hell). I do my best to avert the SCARY LAUREL image whenever possible. I don't "dress like a peer." I believe that the path of fun is the path of least Bad JuJu.

² See Issue #___ page whatever

TURNING DOWN AWARDS

Remember, you can always accept [a peerage] now and give it back later. This saves face for the royalty and hopefully prevents a scene in court.

—Mistress Dorren of Ashwell [East]

If I made it seem as though an offer of peerage is something Easily Dismissed, I'd like to set the record straight here. If it is true that such an offer should be weighed carefully before acceptance (as I believe it is), it is even more true that a decision to decline should receive even more deliberation. In a kingdom where this process of elevation is done with all due deliberation, I find it hard to believe that those involved in the process could allow it to come to fruition with the response of the honoree seriously in doubt. If there was a circumstance in which there was reason to suspect that the person offered might decline, heavens to betsy, wouldn't a smart Crown decide to table actions against a day when the issue would have a clearer resolve? Here's a hypothetical: King Bonehead the Third has the major hots to make Lord Bafflesnake a Pelican. He's heard from the Pelicans; they think Bafflesnake's not ready. Bonehead cares not a fig for all of that, and calls Bafflesnake up into court to create him a Master of the Pelican. Bafflesnake says thanks, but no thanks.

Now it's true that in some ways this is a straw man for the sake of making a point, but it is nonetheless true that one should not be compelled to live with an "honor" they feel unworthy of. And I hope I'm never in the business of suggesting otherwise. Crowns make "mistakes" all the time. So what? I *will* observe, though, that a person declining a peerage might think ahead to the reluctance which would surely attend a future attempt to "re-peer," and that should certainly factor into their thinking.

As it was, I very nearly declined my Knighthood and my Pelican. But those are tales for another time...

—Ædward of Glastonburh [Meridies]

Nobody has to do a darned thing in this club if they don't want to, including accepting awards. (You can always stay home, after all.) However, it does create an awkward situation when a peerage is refused in open court. This is another argument in favor of notifying the candidate beforehand.

—Baron Steffan ap Cennydd [East]

Gee, I can clearly recall that there are times I would have declined the Laurel.

I don't think that by saying, "Your Majesty, I cannot at this time uphold the vows you will ask of me," qualifies as telling the crown that it's made a "mistake." The crown can only offer; the individual is the one that has to live with the responsibility.

By way of parallel, in the Midrealm right now, it is customary to ask crown list participants to consider if they can afford the financial and emotional strain the reign will place on them, and if they do not think they could cope with it, to step down. There is no dishonor in this. I'd respect the

person who stepped down more than the person who fought, won, and then could not fulfill the requirements of the reign.

The same goes with peers. The hard part is that I've heard people say that if a person declined a peerage, they might not get the offer again. Dealing with this is a trick, and I think that's part of the reason that the last person at each vigil should be the crown.

—Master Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]

Ah, this one I feel fully competent to comment upon! Back in the days when God wore Short Pants and Played in the Dirt and I had recently become Chronicler of the Eastrealm, a court barony was offered to me for an absolutely fatuous reason by the royalty. It was patently obvious to many of us it the Upper Reaches of Bureaucracy why it was being done, and that it was woefully inappropriate. I did aspire to earning such a thing down the line, but it certainly wasn't proper yet!

The King took me aside and told me what he was going to do. I declined—and I said that I wanted to turn it down in public. The King went wild and started to refuse my request; the Queen coolly agreed with me. What was my reasoning? "To show that it can be done, and done graciously." No one in the populace needed to "officially know" why I was offered the brass hat, nor why I really turned it down. I simply said that I was not yet worthy of such an accolade, and dressed it up in pretty speech; everyone thought it was a great bit of Theatre (there I go again! I was a New York actress for five years; sue me), no one was publicly embarrassed, and people were shown that you didn't have to accept everything given to you. Did I get it later? Yes, by a few years. I was quite proud to receive it then, because I had given service, and felt, if not that I "deserved" it, that I wouldn't shame it.

Every rule needs an exception; everyone needs to see that occasionally even royalty can make an "oops" and that it can be dealt with smoothly and politely; the world doesn't fall in.

—Tamera FitzGloucestre of the White Boar [Meridies]

HOW MANY PEERS?

When I was elevated to Laurel, a friend asked me how many knights there were in the kingdom. "100. Maybe less," I guessed "And how many Laurels?" "150 or so. Maybe less." "And what's the ratio of fighters to everybody else in your shire?" "Seven fighters authorized out of the forty in the shire." "So why aren't there five times more Laurels than knights?"

Anyone know?

—Master Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]

Eowyn Amberdrake asks if an "average" number of peers made per reign indicates healthy growth, and suggests two to three of each as a possible number. Yes, an average number would indicate people advancing and being recognised as such. But in Ansteorra, I feel, *one* of each per reign may be too many. Even one a year may be too many. Each kingdom will, of necessity, be different.

—Æthelyan of Moondragon [Ansteorra]

The "ideal" percentage of the population to be peers is the number that deserve it. The best "average" number of peers made per reign is the number of new people who deserve it. I've seen reigns where two peers were made, and it was too many. I've seen one reign where 16 peers were made, and it was about right.

It's been my experience that when peers start discussing numbers, they do it because they don't like the current candidate and can't give a cogent reason. If somebody deserves a peerage, then the numbers of peers elevated recently is no reason to deny it. If nobody deserves a peerage, then the lack of peerages given is no reason to make one.

—Robin of Gilwell [Ansteorra]

THE ORDER OF THE LAUREL

[The following originally appeared in The Mews a year or more ago, and was given to me as a photocopy. I obtained the author's permission to reprint, and he has changed the last paragraph slightly.]

The Road to Mastery: Have you ever noticed that there are two kinds of Laurels? Among my friends I've been referring to them as Court Masters and Urban Masters. And before anyone starts jumping to conclusions I should state that all this is completely unofficial and that I am not writing here to criticize anything. At best I hope to provoke some thoughtful discussion; no more.

The Urban Master tends to be a prolific artisan of serviceable crafts. After making hundreds of objects—say, mugs, for instance—your skills are bound to improve. Furthermore, if you've given a lot of these things away, or sold them, a lot of people have examples of your work. So, the Urban Master tends to be fairly well known, particularly among the common folk.

The Court Master, on the other hand, is making the most lavish, intense objects possible. Frequently these treasures go to Royalty, or the higher nobility, as the common folk are neither entitled to such things (peerage scrolls, crowns, coronation garb, etc.) nor able to afford them. The Court Master, or Royal Master, may spend months on a single piece which understandably demonstrates the most extensive documentation and cleverness in technique. Give the hours spent on the thing, of course, even objects sold are generally charity work since the hourly wage can be less than a dollar. So, being a Court Master has a element of noble self-sacrifice to it, as well.

Obyiously, it is much easier to award the Laurel to a person who is so cleverly making objects "fit for a King." For one thing, the grateful King is right there. For another, the documentation technique and attention to detail are there, too. (Woe unto the shoddy workman here.)

The Urban Master, meanwhile, has been cheerfully producing relatively uncomplicated objects for the improvement of everyone else in the kingdom. And worse, he may actually be making a profit, in some cases a living producing these things. Some might think that to be reward enough.

Further, it's hard to look at, say, a mug, and say "This is fit for a King," or "This is a Laurel-quality mug." Who's

kidding who? It's a plain old mug. The documentation may be a picture from a single book and the construction time may be less than ten minutes, all steps included. But there is skill there, particularly if normal production is two hundred such mugs a month, twenty shirts a week, or so on. In fact, the Urban Master develops many skills the Court Master never needs.

But there are doubts. How well does the Urban Master know the documentation, granted that he seems to know a lot about simple practicalities? Does he have the skills and technique to do lavishly complicated or difficult projects? Can he withstand the pressure of intense commissions for intense customers?

Often these questions take years to answer to the satisfaction of the Laurels and the Monarchs. For the ambitious artisan, the waiting requires patience, and a willingness to take on creative challenges whenever practical. The Urban Master often has to rise to some great project or commission before receiving the Laurel. It's normal, and not at all a bad thing. Of course, if you're burning the candle to serve the great masses, showing off for the upper crust may just have to wait a while.

Each art and science has its royal and its common aspects. Whichever way your inclinations lead you, do the best you can and only take shortcuts in complexity, not quality. Your virtues will be noticed and appreciated.

—Master Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]¹

As a Laurel, I know that the effect of producing period objects for the paying populace can be profound. Consider one person who owns a mug from Lars, a pair of boots from Richard or Istvan, a tunic made off a well-researched pattern which appeared in a newsletter he was already getting, and a cloak clasp which matches one from a bog find, both in design and material. He is happier in the SCA for having objects he can be proud of, and if you multiply that by the number of people who take advantage of the inexpensive treasures available, the overall result is that at an event at which there might have been 100 modern tin and aluminum cups of various types, there are 100 ceramic tankards instead. We lose sight of a pair of army boots or sneakers every time someone wears the boots or shoes he made or bought. A square of cloth can be as period a cloak as ever was, with the right broach, and they're for sale out there for \$15 to \$35 dollars.

The king can't see his own crown when he's wearing it, but he can look out on his people and see the effects of what Lars has dubbed the Urban Laurels.

—Ælfled of Duckford [Outlands]

THE ORDER OF THE PELICAN

The term and concept of protege has not taken hold in Ansteorra. Personally, I like it, but I think many Pelicans here are recognised for creating something new—and how does one teach that?

—Æthelstan of Moondragon [Ansteorra]

¹ Master Lars is a Laurel (among other things) who makes mugs (among other things).

The Order of the Pelican as an ex-Great Officers Club?!? Our discussions of candidates seem to show an enormous prejudice against giving a Pelican to a current or ex-Great Officer for "just doing the job." Although those who have done an exceptional job generally get recognized, most of those who have been admitted over the last several years were not (yet, usually) Great Officers, or even Lesser Officers.

—William the Lucky [West]

I'm disturbed by the fact that much of the discussion of Pelicans seems to assume that the only path is through a major office at the Royal or Regional level. This is not (or *should* not) be true. I'm always on the lookout for the people who bust their behinds doing work no one else wants or even thought of. I was very glad to see Master Thorvald Klaufland offered the Pelican, for example. He had never held any office. What he *had* done was go to innumerable events throughout the realm and spend the entire event in the kitchen, where his aid was considered invaluable by many a Chief Cook.

If I read another letter that claims that Pelican service should be "beyond sanity," I'm gonna barf. I got my Pelican for two things: (a) reconstructing the Eastern College of Heraldry after my predecessor had neglected it to the point of collapse and (b) organizing the "town-crier" communication system at Pennsic. Okay. Now why did I do what I did? To become a Pelican? No. Because I "loved it"? I loved heraldry, I despised paperwork. Because I was "insane"? Hardly. No, I did it for (you read it here first) *POWER*. Yes, power.

Now, power can be of two kinds. There's Evil Power. Evil power involves a benefit-shift. It means shifting the benefits of participating in the club from Person (or Group) A to Person (or Group) B. "Make Alfred a knight, your Majesty, and forget about Bernard. If you don't do it my way, I'll make your life miserable by..." Well, it's not usually that blatant, but you get the idea.

Then there's Benevolent Power. That's what I wanted. I saw areas in the SCA, mainly involving heraldic display and ceremonial, where I felt we were doing it wrong. I felt the SCA could be improved by making certain changes. So I became Brigantia Herald in order to be in a position to exert power to make those changes. Once I got there, believe me, a lot of new opportunities for change opened up, ones that I'd never even realized. And at Pennsic XIII, I learned that the kingdom was not displeased with the changes I made.

—Steffan ap Cennydd [East]

My apologies to all those with poor associations to the concept "mules." In my culture the mule is valued as a creature of great strength and stamina, sure-footedness, and good sense. Frankly, I had never considered the idea that they are sexless. I think we can agree, however, that we would not expect a mule to make a speech, prepare quarterly reports, or model Elizabethan garb. The work they do so well is vital to the health and success of our Society, but they sometimes do not fit the paper doll ideals we imagine for good Peers.

I like Hrolf's "worker-Pelican." Feel free to substitute it for "mule."

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

No one should get the Pelican (or any other Peerage) for mediocrity. To deserve a Peerage one *must* perform up to a high standard in the appropriate field and do it consistently, one must (as William the Lucky said) also be broadly involved in several aspects of the Society. Peers have obligations that simply cannot be met by someone who does not meet these two criteria. Ælfled's problematical treasurer and parking lot attendant manifestly do not meet these criteria, either (as Kirk FitzDavid asks) does a person who avoids leading. I also don't believe that Lars Vilhjalmsson's "mules" (if all they do is the work they're told to do) qualify, either.

I don't know how many times I've said it in council: "NOBODY DESERVES A PELICAN FOR JUST DOING THEIR JOB!" I absolutely agree with William the Lucky that simply holding a kingdom (or any other) office for a few years and then turning it over undamaged is not enough (the GoA was invented specifically to unbind the mouths of this species of kine). To become a Peer one must have exhibited outstanding performance; for a Pelican candidate this could mean:

- You resurrected a moribund office.
- You found an unmet service or organizational need and filled it.
- You created an office or redefined it.
- You consistently found whatever needed doing and did it well.
- You instituted innovative procedures or removed obstructions.
- You kept your head in a crisis or crises and kept things together.
- You did the hard thankless job that nobody else would do without complaint or failure.
- You organized/codified an area that had been chaotic.
- You replaced caprice and favoritism with consistency and fairness.
- You set the standard for performing a particular job or service.
- You started or were otherwise instrumental in ensuring the success of a chapter.
- Combinations, permutations and so on, you should have the idea by now.

And all the while you have to have been involved in SCA activities and interests and behaved chivalrously and courteously to all.

To return to Kirk FitzDavid's original question, all the things I mentioned in the list exhibit leadership of one kind or another, whether it's leadership in innovation, organization, creativity, problem solving or by example, leadership is *absolutely* a criterion. To answer his question directly, someone who deliberately or *otherwise* avoids leading (*italics mine*) is NOT worthy of a peerage (and probably shouldn't even be noticed or mentioned as a candidate for one).

To change tack slightly, the whole concept of Pelicans having protégés sets my teeth on edge. The very term reeks of favoritism, carpet bagging, the spoils system and other unsavory ways to avoid judging someone on the merits of their own performance. Like it or not, "apprentice" and "squire" have connotations of someone who is learning a

trade until they can prove their own merits (make their masterpiece/win their spurs); "protégé" does not.

In the West the tendency of Pelicans who hold office in the more bureaucratized fields (think of keys and trumpets) to push their gofers, file clerks and stamp lickens as Pelican candidates no doubt contributes to this impression. Why a peer who qualified on inspiration, innovation and grueling hard work would wish to turn around and debase the coinage of his or her own proud achievement with time servers and yes-persons escapes me, but it became so widespread and flagrant that neither I nor my Lady will attend council meetings any more.

—Kevin Perigryne [West]

RELATIONSHIP OF KNIGHT TO SQUIRE, ETC.

I have one apprentice, taken after much agonizing. My Laurel left the Society well before I became a peer, and it was devastating to me. At the time Kiera became my apprentice, I was ready to quit entirely, and I didn't want to follow in my Mistress' footsteps in quite that manner. I stayed, and we have a very informal relationship for the most part. Occasionally I ask her to do something (usually prepare work for an exhibit or competition) and she's never failed to present a stunning piece. Our relationship is one of friendship and mutual teaching. We don't do formal lessons, and I don't expect her to partially be a lady in waiting/servant, although she at times takes it upon herself to bring me water, help me dress, etc. As a part of my persona work, I know the tone in my voice changes slightly when I ask something Laurel-apprentice rather than as friends. She knows this too, and it works quite well for us.

I think if either of us became unhappy with the arrangement we could end it and still remain close friends.

—Dorren of Ashwell [East]

While I have had several squires, I have never really considered taking proteges as a Pelican. Partly because it seldom is done in the West, and partly because there is less of a teaching aspect involved in the service order than in the fighting or arts orders. I can see how to deal with such a protegee, as my primary role with my squires is to encourage them to learn, both from me and from others, to enter fighting events and to guide them in developing the conduct expected of a Peer. That would readily work for proteges, with "encourage them to serve" in place of "enter fighting events." I would be interested in hearing how others view their role in these relationships and how common Pelican proteges are in other kingdoms.

—Anton Højen [West]

In our House, when Cai takes a squire, the squire swears his fealty to *both* of us. Cai commits to teaching—and the squire to learning—all those things the knight knows about chivalry, honor, and earning and deserving the accolade. In addition, however, I pledge to instruct him in those things that set apart the knight from those who are merely "skilled sword wielders"—courtly graces and non-martial arts, to be sure; but also patience, gentility, kindness, the true "gentler

virtues.” This is not to say Cai cannot do it; I will be the first in the world to acknowledge he can. But if we go the full route of courtliness and chivalric behavior, women had a lot to do with it, and our House sees it as a full commitment from both of us. There is a difference between the sexes, no matter how equal we try to make them; a woman will have a different effect teaching these things than a man.

How did I get to know how to be a knight’s lady? No one taught me. Trial and error. And I made more than my share of mistakes. So House de Lyon has instituted the taking of demoiselles—in a sense, these ladies “squire” to me. I pledge to teach them the things they will need to know as a knight’s lady, who may run her own peer-level household in the future: caring for the people in her household and inspiring the squires with her own virtues; being the mirror of gentility and courtesy, that her knight may never forget his own knightly honor; being the quiet voice of patience and reason that supports his quest for fairness and justice when things get a little insane and blood runs high. In short, the knight’s lady is *his inspiration*, and such a position deserves study and contemplation as much as any Society role or accolade. What is asked of a demoiselle in terms of service and learning is more and different than a lady in waiting, and very different from a simple household member. I’ve taken two, and I have seen improvement and change in those who have sworn this particular oath. They see it as no different from becoming an apprentice or protegee to a Laurel or Pelican.

It is not *required* that a squire’s lady become my demoiselle; it is an independent decision on her part. We have one lady in the house now who would make a splendid one, but has a baby and knows (as I do) that Babies Come First. When the little one is more ambulatory and amenable to other caretakers, she will probably take a demoiselle’s baldric.

I should love comment and feedback on this idea. I’m running it blind and forging my own path. I know I won’t think of everything, and there are wise folk who read these pages who are sure to have valuable input.

—Tamera FitzGloucestre of the White Boar [Meridies]

On “Toledo Steel” Squires: Justin and Robin were easy proteges to have, since they didn’t really need me, anyway. If they were all like that, we wouldn’t need the institution at all. I do, however, have a couple of proteges that I took because I felt they they I did need guidance, not because of any extraordinary potential for great advancement. One, for example, was a 15-year-old genius from Michigan, thrown into the whirl at Brown University in RI. He needed focusing, a sense of center, and I hope I gave him a little of that. He turned into a fine SCA person, tried autocratting, was a local pursuivant and a decent fighter.

Justin on Varying Relationships: My proteges are not “squire brothers.” Each one has a different, unique one-on-one association to me as their Master. The “family” concept can work easily with the Chivalry, but I found it difficult.

—Steffan ap Cennydd [East]

The Japanese make magnificent swords out of terrible metal. But the process of hammering, folding and welding, days on end, transforms the metal before the sword is formed. I have known peers to take students in order to make them

into good human beings. Ambitions to peerage come much later, if at all. Until you have a good person, you cannot hope to have a worthy peer. Every teacher must choose their own burdens.

—Lars Vilhjalmsen [Calontir]

It’s pretty simple, actually. We are friends, and I help him into his armor and bring him diet Cokes now and then. he helps me into my armor and teaches me to fight and how to be a peer. There you have it.

—Kytte Meliora Stevenson [Meridies]

I accept someone as a squire if I think they earnestly want to fight well, be chivalrous, and be courteous and if I think I could go on a 12 hour car trip with them and enjoy it. That’s about it.

—Gyrth Oldcastle [Atlantia]

We have received a request for a new topic: Sexual ethics between SCA authority figures (especially Peers) and their subordinates. Proceed with caution, but let’s have it.

FEALTY

I commend Robin of Gilwell on his well-structured argument against the notion of fealty being sworn to the crown [TW 14:17]. It has caused me to reconsider my thoughts regarding fealty. As a knight I am fealty to the king and I feel I must swear fealty to each king as the opportunity presents itself. Years ago I considered resigning my belt due to the impending reign of a king I had little respect for. After some soul searching, I decided that knights in period had to serve kings who were less than they might wish. They found the means to stand in fealty and retain their own honor, and they were not able to look forward to a change in six months. I considered “swearing to the crown” to be part of that, but not I am not so sure. I will continue to swear my fealty, but the interplay with the person will occupy more of my thoughts.

—Anton Højen [West]

For giving Robin the impression that I am metal-obsessed, I apologize. Of *course* fealty is sworn by people, to people. What I should have said was that when I swear fealty I’m not measuring my estimate of how well a given King and Queen will be able to uphold their end of the bargain. Like any contract, all I can do with consistent effect is guarantee my part of the bargain, that I not breach the commitment which I have made. For the honor of the others in the compact, they will have to look to themselves. Have I been disappointed in Fealty? Well, somewhat, but thankfully, very little over the last 17 years. As several observed, it is a compact of loyalty, not stupidity or blind servitude. I’ve had to tell Kings and Queens “no,” as I suspect I will have to again, in the future.

A question for William the Lucky: In a Crown in which an eventual winner has ignored “a dozen or so,” have you no mechanism for saving the kingdom from the machinations of one who would so misuse what the Crown Tournament field is meant to be? If we let that happen in Meridies, we would deserve what we wound up with.

—Ædward of Glastonburh [Meridies]

I agree with Don Robin of Gilwell—fealty is sworn to people, not objects or abstracts. If I am allowed my own words, they are, “My service and loyalty are yours; my honour is my own, but I will bear it as if it were yours.”

—Æthelyan of Moondragon [Ansteorra]

To Robin of Gilwell: No, I do not wish to swear to King Log, nor to a metal circlet, but neither can I dwell too long on personalities, particularly early in a reign when so much is only suspected, not known. As a chivalrous person I am prepared to extend the benefit of the doubt to a lot of people, and I very much agree with your model of loyalty. But I have met a few individuals, in the Society as a whole, whose reigns would have to be held without the benefit of my fealty. And I might end up having to apologize to my friends later for having failed to act for their protection.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

What does “fealty” mean in the SCA, anyway? I suspect that those who first introduced the concept to the SCA back in AS Zero or so had in mind an offer of support of the organization and its goals. I doubt that the idea of changing the king’s flat tires in the rain, of blind-faith support of his dumb/unpopular/dishonorable ideas, was there from the beginning. I normally swear fealty. (Well, actually, I “reaffirm” it.) I feel it is my duty as a baron and a peer to do so, but I don’t feel any obligation for blind faith. My fealty, though put in a period form, is an acknowledgment of my continuing support for the goals of the Society and its relevant subgroups of which I am a member (the East, the Pelican). The obligation of one in fealty is not, as so often thought, to say “My Country, right or wrong.” The real burden of a peer in fealty is the *obligation* to say “Your Majesty, this is madness!” and risk his wrath.

—Steffan ap Cennydd [East]

When I swear fealty, it is to the Crown and Kingdom, not to the persons who wear the former and rule the latter (regardless of the wording). Perhaps it’s my seniority in this outfit (or oncoming senility) but I never have nor will behave as if I swore an oath of *lobotomy* instead. My duty to Crown and Kingdom permits and sometimes requires that I oppose and speak out against actions or policies that the current incumbents are promoting that will damage the kingdom or the reputation and authority of the Crown. Despite some people’s misconceptions, the King cannot do exactly as he pleases. Law, custom, official and unofficial advisors, and the fact that the Crown has **no** actual coercive power whatsoever make this so.

Admittedly, my loyalty to my oath requires that I take all other possible actions to persuade the sovereigns to change their course before openly opposing them. Also I hold this particular attitude only in the case of truly damaging or dangerous acts or plans. If I only find them offensive or ill-judged I’ll simply make myself absent if the sovereigns cannot be persuaded to drop/change them.

Royalty, like military officers, must *never* give an order that won’t be obeyed.

On the other hand, because of the way that I hold to my oath of fealty, I have no problem swearing to a MoA or

unbelted king (not that we’ve had one of the latter in the West in 20 years).

—Kevin Perigrinne [West]

FEALTY OATHS

This one my beloved lord husband Sir Cai and I go ’round and ’round on. Where I grew up (the Eastrealm), when you swore fealty, it was in your own words. You crafted them carefully, you said what was in your heart, you meant them, every syllable, because *you had created them*. I find it hard to swear the same words everyone else swears (as is done here in Meridies), because they don’t say everything that I might, nor mean the same that my words might mean.

Cai, on the other hand, grew up in the West, and feels that swearing the same oath is perfectly right and normal. There are those who might also say that using the same words over and over again invest them with a certain amount of “magic.”

Is this another case of “East v. West”? How is it done elsewhere? How do people feel?

—Tamera FitzGloucestre of the White Boar [Meridies]

MASTERY OF ARMS

I have a question or two, directed at the folks from the East, I suppose. This idea of a master of arms as king troubles me. I thought a fighter became a master instead of a knight because he could not/would not swear fealty. How could such a person be king? Oaths of fealty cut two ways, at least here in Meridies. If the master cannot swear fealty for religious or philosophical principles, how can he in good conscience accept another’s oath? If the master simply refuses to swear fealty, or wishes to pick and choose the sovereigns he will swear to, then why would anyone be willing to swear to him? Somebody help me out with this, in case my mundane occupation forces me back east one day.

—Derwyn Smallfoot [Meridies]

AUTHENTICITY

Horrors! You mean we do non-period dances?!

Actually there are maybe some 200 period dances, but many of them are undoable because they exist only in fragments—no music, incomplete directions, &c.

One of the things I’m working on is analysis of the structure of period dances in order to make new dances in the period style. Makes just too popular with words with the professionals who think we’re all a little kooky anyhow.

—Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]

I guess I’m showing my credentials as Food Authenticity Police, but here’s the deal: Chocolate is not period, and wishing will not make it so. Let it be said that I love chocolate at least as much as the next guy, and probably more, but there’s a time and a place for everything—I would no more make chocolate chip cookies for an event, or pretend that a chocolate layer cake makes a good subtlety, than I would wear full Elizabethan clothes to the offices of the U.S. Department of Education.. There are *lots* of documented

period dances (I'll leave it to Justin to give you an approximate number); Hole in the Wall *is* a fine dance (and one of the few Gyrth will dance with me), but it's *not* pre-17th Century. When I first joined the SCA, the peerage scrolls that were given were probably not objectively as good as the awards of arms scrolls being done now. The simple truth is that, as we learn more, we may find that some long-held, even cherished, beliefs are wrong. Should we hold to them anyway? I don't think so.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

Few people have the opportunity to participate in first person interpretive efforts but I have been fortunate enough to have participated as a volunteer in the program at Plimoth Plantation in Plymouth, Massachusetts. I know there are others out there who have also done museum interpretive work and I would love to hear from you. At Plimoth we basically take over the village for the weekend and live, eat and sleep the lives of our pilgrim forefathers. (By now you have probably figured out that I am one of the unfortunate ones trapped in that 50 year period following 1600 that no one seems willing to completely cut off. I have done this period for ten years and will NEVER do anything else.) To participate in this kind of experience is, to say the least, eye opening. When everything around you is correct, it is very easy to slip into a period mindset. Although, to be honest, it takes a couple of hours of mind racing terror before you manage to get comfortable enough to converse in period accents without thinking too hard about it.

Anything can happen when doing first person interpretation. I have fenced with live steel in the dirt streets under a brilliant moon, I have belted out period songs while downing food and puddle ale in an Elizabethan ale house that was set up one evening for the volunteers. When you awake in the morning to the sound of the cock crowing you smell the straw in your mattress and the moist sea air has left a damp odor the houses as well. If you get cold at night, that's OK too because so did our ancestors. I have even joined the King's navy by taking his shilling in a moment of weakness that occurred after listening to the glorious tales told by the recruiter, who, true to character, turned out to be not so nice a guy after I accepted. That wasn't a problem because I had lied about my name anyway.

My point to this is that when you are surrounded by authenticity, you begin to look very hard at the details of what you are doing and you are driven to make your interpretation better and better. Details are what is important in authenticity. I can't tell you how many times I have been wowed by someone doing or saying the most mundane thing that, in his/her period is very correct. This goes for any period. Really, each one of us is doing an interpretation of our period of history and the place where it occurred. When we deal with the public we make our best effort, so there is no reason we cannot do the same for each other. The one piece of advice I give to people who ask me where I come up with all the "little things" that are so nifty is RESEARCH. It won't cause harm to your person and you might be surprised by what you find.

If all of us would endeavor to be more authentic in our clothes, mannerisms, the common objects that surround us at

events, and the little things we talk about (realizing that everyone and every event has its limits) this could rub off on people who have quit trying and new people who are in need of guidance.

—David VanMeteren [Middle]¹

Whoa, Ælflæd! Part, indeed most, of the reason that "tolerance" has gotten a bad name is the same as the reason that any other virtue gets one occasionally: Moderation got lost in the process. Cleanliness is a virtue, but if you encounter someone who budgets 15 minutes in every hour for bathing you realize that it can be overdone. However: The rest of the reason is that those who have reached their tolerance limit have an unfortunate tendency to be less than careful in how they express themselves on the subject. But just as screaming "Quiet!" does not contribute to the tranquility of the immediate environment; harsh criticism of someone else's failure to meet your standards for authenticity tends only to convince them that they want nothing to do with you or your opinions—which particularly includes your opinions of the importance of authenticity, so they end up refusing to move at all in the direction you intended.

—William the Lucky [West]

If I were prone to blast up to people and criticize them, or if I failed to involve myself in educational activities or in luring people into the mainstream, I would feel pretty guilty, but I don't so I don't. When people ask me "Why don't you think so-&-so should be a laurel (or a pelican)?" and if the answer is something like "Because of a lack of concern with the SCA's purpose" or "no interest in authenticity" or "they make us look bad to outsiders" I tend to get answers like "Oh, Ælflæd, you're so critical. You should be *tolerant* of other people's lifestyles/beliefs/limitations." What they seem to mean is not just to tolerate them, but to totally overlook these flaws, or to celebrate them! To *prove* I am tolerant by recommending them all for peerage!

Maybe I was vague before. Sorry.

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

Mistress Ælflæd, I agree—the word *tolerance* is often overused and misapplied. I think the line (for me at least—I expect everyone has a personal definition) is when I am asked

¹ I have been in the SCA for ten years. Although I lived on the fringe of the Middle Kingdom for half of that time I have been to East Kingdom events. I now continue to live in the Middle Kingdom, in Columbus, Ohio. I am apprenticed to Mistress Gwynydd ni Gelligaer. For the sake of the biographical information I will state that I have no alphabet soup following my name. I stopped going to Pennsic five years ago after camping next to "The Addams Family" who sat about their campfire discussing their favorite drugs (and doing them, for all I know). I plan to return this year and give it another whirl. I am married to Lady Ernil du Fauconor, AOA CW who is also apprenticed to Mistress Gwynydd.

My area of interest is the period from 1600 to about 1630. My skills are in pottery (period reproductions), clothing, leather working, wood working (furniture reproductions), wood carving, shoe making, etc. I take my name from a distant ancestor. I have traced my family to the 13th century. In particular is one Emmanuel VanMeteren, famous Dutch author and historian of the 16th century. I even have a facsimile edition of one of his works. I hope all this helps you to understand where my thoughts come from.

to tolerate something that does me harm. Note—I did not say “offends me.” Slave/S&M regalia, for example, offends me, but it doesn’t harm me (until the point where someone tries to put it on me). The problem with this definition, however, is when someone claims mental harm—i.e. bunny fur bikinis/loincloths are degrading to all women/men, therefore they are degrading to me, therefore they are harming me. This leads me to suggest that the definition must be something concrete, rather than simply mental distress or the like. It is a difficult line to draw, one which mundane lawyers have fought over for years. In the end, what we tolerate in the SCA will probably continue to be defined on a case by case basis, and we are better off for it.

—Simon d’Este of Mantua [West]

The phrase “Not as it is, but as it should have been” can be useful, however it is probably the most convenient excuse every invented. I agree with using modern plumbing and sanitary methods. We don’t want to be so realistic as to have people dying before they are 30. However, do we really need fans, refrigerators and generators in our tents? To each his own, but I don’t want any of those in *my* tent. I could go mundane camping, get all that, and go through a lot less trouble. At least I wouldn’t have to make new clothes!

—Carmela [Trimaris]

Dealing with the ideal aspects of the culture—with courtliness and chivalry in their purest, rather than basest, forms—has been justified to me with the “not as it was” argument. I’ve also heard it used to justify having our regular inordinate number of nobles, and to explain that we don’t have the inquisition and the black death.

When it is used to revise history, to overlay the political correctness of the moment on Europe hundreds of years ago, it makes me only somewhat nervous. I don’t mind racial, cultural & gender equality being applied to our “medieval lives.”

Everyone draws the line in a different place. We don’t expect feasts to be made on cookfires on spits and in iron kettles. A modern stainless steel kitchen with good lighting is something we pay extra for. Some people, then, will see electrical lighting on merchant’s row or having a refrigerator or microwave in their camp as only one small step away.

Before I read so much of what has been in *ThinkWell*, I was disappointed with the SCA as a re-creationist group, because of the lack of authenticity. I’ve felt much better for the past year or so, since I started thinking of events as medieval theme-parties, and considering that we probably perform our stated purpose quite sufficiently by the publications, classes and practices.

—Ælfælð of Duckford [Outlands]

SCA CULTURE VS. HISTORICAL RECREATION

I have been running into more historical accuracy buffs lately and frankly, it is getting on my nerves. I consider myself a mainstream, active member in the Society, and I do try to improve my knowledge of the history, arts, etc. of the

period. What rubs me wrong is the exclusivity of any comprehensive attempt at historical accuracy. They each narrow down to a particular country and time. The SCA was begun with a broader scope and it has continued to evolve in that direction. Our titles reflect the growth of a distinct culture—one that recognizes and reflects the diverse cultures of our period. Just as distinct titles and structures evolved in different countries, it is appropriate for us to have developed titles and structures that reflect our “Current Middle Ages.” We are not England, or Germany; we are the Society for Creative Anachronism, with a rich diversity that is uniquely our own.

—Anton Højen [West]

To quote my anthropology text, enculturation is “the process by which culture is learned and acquired by particular individuals.”

Another definition from the same text: Culture is “the way of life of a people, including their behavior, the things they make, and their ideas.”

Our Society has its own culture. It is based partly on the culture of the middle ages and renaissance, and partly on our modern culture, but I believe that it is distinct from both and can be studied as a separate culture. I see enculturation within our Society as falling somewhere between nonexistent and extremely sparse. Most of us are largely self-enculturated.

The Society’s problems with authenticity are essentially problems of enculturation. Within most societies, enculturation teaches children acceptable adult behavior. Once they attain adulthood they are expected to act accordingly.

Most new members are enculturated only enough so that they actually wear a tunic. Beyond that level little is done to continue this process of enculturation.

Authenticity within the Society will improve when we enculturate our members with the belief that authenticity is truly important. We barely pay lip service to the idea now, and I have a long way to go too.

When William the Lucky says that a flood of new members was more than could possibly be enculturated, he is right, especially with the present system of enculturation (or lack thereof).

—Conor mac Cinneide [Ansteorra]

If we are going to understand “SCA Culture,” the first thing that we need to understand is that the SCA is *not* a culture, it is a *sub-culture*. Sub-cultures differ from cultures in some important respects:

—The participants spend a significant portion of their time outside the group—in the wider culture rather than the sub-culture. And they bring the attitudes of the wider culture with them, albeit with a few (frequently conscious) modifications, when acting within the subculture. Thus, while Conor mac Cinneide mentions [TW 13:27] the three pillars of the SCA culture, and the conflicts between them, the greatest opportunity for conflict is between the ideals of the sub-culture (whatever compromises this may constitute between the ideals of its parts) and the ideals of the wider culture. Consider only the most obvious: the basis of the sub-culture (in any of its three pillars) is

hierarchical and built around the concept that everyone has his proper *and unchanging* position within that hierarchy; the wider culture is egalitarian and places great importance on the idea that anyone can succeed (rise through such hierarchy as exists).

—Sub-cultures are often deliberately created, where cultures ‘just grow’—often by diverging slowly from another culture. Conor suggests that this is one of the few cultures whose creation is known. Well, it would be if it were a culture; but sub-cultures are much more likely to have known origins.

—Perhaps surprisingly, sub-cultures (even one put together from such diverse and conflicting elements as the SCA) tend to be more internally consistent than cultures. Thus we worry about reconciling our various traditions and sources. But the mundane culture manages to believe mutually contradictory things without even noticing most of the time. (See the point above about egalitarianism and success—which are obviously not compatible in their ideal forms.)

—William the Lucky [West]

BUNNY-FUR

I like Cadfan’s approach to the bunny-fur debate, and have been able to incorporate it pretty well. It’s great fun to speculate with Elizabethan friends whether [the bunny-fur wearers] might perhaps be Spanish spies...

—Dorren of Ashwell [East]

I find these amusing, especially male reactions. Deep inside, I regret I can’t get away with wearing one anymore (although, in my younger, thinner days I did as a lark). I do, however, reserve the right—if they ask me—to tell the wearers (male and female) that their costume is neither period nor authentic for any known culture (or what one culture thought of another). At tourneys (not Crown) they can be fun, but I don’t really like to see them in court!

I do not consider myself a member of the Authenticity Police (or Nazis); however, I have been accused of being such. This opinion is held because, when asked, I give my opinions. I might giggle or laugh at a costume attempt, but only in private and would *never* intentionally hurt anyone, especially a newcomer. Heaven knows, I still remember some of mine! However, if someone *asks* me I follow these guidelines:

- 1) The first question warrants a civil response, usually something nice (“good color choice” or “flattering” are safe bets).
- 2) The second question’s response is still polite but not as sugar-coated (nice fabric, but try changing the neckline).
- 3) A persistent questioner gets as complete a critique as I can make.

I follow these guidelines because the first question is seeking reassurance, the second is fishing, but the third (or more) indicates a search for truth. If someone who searches for truth finds it unpalatable, I’m sorry, but by not telling them the truth, I’m not being true to my own search for truth. I never excuse rudeness, however. Even bitter truths are easier to swallow when offered with the wine of courtesy.

—Saqra ál Khudsi [Ansteorra]

LAWS

I agree with you absolutely on the subject of laws about things that NEVER will be right (i.e., don’t make the law). On the other hand, your opening tirade led me to reflect on good laws: they tend to remain on the books with consistent enforcement for years and years. I was led to this in part by reading the recently issued umpteenth edition of the West Kingdom Rules of Combat. Do you know that 99% of the wording is *exactly* as I wrote it 20 years ago? Forgive my hubris, but I am DAMNED proud of that!

—Kevin Perigryne [West]

If a knight breaks a date with a lady at the war, is he in violation of Corpora for such obvious disrespect? If a female brazenly throws her arms around someone who is not her husband and kisses him on the mouth, is she in violation of Corpora for not behaving like a lady? The problem with any vague laws (existing or proposed) is that they are enforced according to the interpretation of whomever is in power at the time. Who would check to determine if a lady’s garb was too “revealing”? There used to be US Federal Employees called “Corset Inspectors” whose job it was to ensure that all women in their state wore corsets, since some states did not allow women to appear in public without wearing them. If the SCA needs a “Bunny-Fur Inspector,” what self-sacrificing soul will volunteer?

—Michael of the Isles [East]

LANGUAGE

“To speak forsoothly” is from a novel (by Josephine Tey as I recall) to poke fun at writers of historical novels who skip the history/culture and have their characters spouting “thee” and “forsooth” and so on.

—Lady Eadgith [Outlands]

Thank you for your devotion to the proper use of English. Besides “farspeaker,” my own pet peeve is “fire dragon,” which is commonly used in this part of the Midrealm (i.e. “I left my feast gear in my fire dragon”) as if there were no medieval words for a wheeled conveyance. Is this a society-wide usage?

—Lady Josceline Levesque [Middle]

Chariot. In our kingdom they are “fire chariots.” About 15 degrees better. If people around me say “dragons” they mean, no doubt, airplanes, as in “I came here in a dragon.” I don’t want to think about which end they got out of.

✓ How about wagon, cart, carriage, coach; *how about car!*? [14th century; check it out; *Oxford English Dictionary*] I might not want to say the tan VW Jetta, but should I say “yon dun German car,” Chaucer himself would understand me. (He might try to tell me it wasn’t quite “dun,” but I probably wouldn’t understand a word he said.)

—Ælfled of Duckford [Outlands]

In addition to collecting words that we frown on (feastocrat, dragon), I’d enjoy an ongoing list of words we should use instead. I saw a similar list from the Rialto once. Justin, Cariadoc, Eowyn, Cathy, or others may be able to

help—the files of screens I *know* I captured elude me...
—Yves Fortanier [Meridies]

To the fair and virtuous Ælflæd of Duckford from Gyrth Oldcastle—

My mundane small, Michael, would like to feastcrat an event, but his farspeaker skills are insufficient.

—Duke Sir Master Gyrth Oldcastle
P.S. Am I first? I ain't afraid of no aging weakling. Hah!

Well you were the first, but not the last:

I just finished reading TW #14, and feel I must tell you the story of the feast-o-crat who was on the farspeaker with a mundane while her smalls were pestering her and up walks Duke Sir Master...

—Derwyn Smallfoot [Meridies]

"MUNDANE"

I have a squire who refers to the public as "danés." I haven't picked up the habit myself, but it's a fun solution, if a bit aconfusing to Scandinavian nationalists.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

I joined the SCA when the term "mundane" was a noun as well as an adjective, and I suppose I've gotten used to it. As an alternative, how about the term "modern"? Face it, there are some pretty mundane aspects of SCA life, too! (For instance, washing feastware and dishes, Pennsic privy and shower lines, dust in the Outlands, humidity in An Tir...)

—Æthelyan of Moondragon [Ansteorra]

The first time I used "mundane" around my family, I might as well have been stoned, for the reception I got. So I found an alternative suggested by Master Telbyrne Morningstar and Mistress Janet Morningstar to be satisfactory—that of "20th century." ANYONE who is around me in my normal job will know it's *not* mundane after they've watched for more than a few hours. I work at a pesticide research contract field laboratory—one of those places that does long-term aquatic studies to determine environmental effects of various compounds on everything from the water chemistry, through plankton, invertebrates, and fish reproduction as well. My own specialty area is phytoplankton and periphyton—yes, I get paid to work with pond scum and slime. On any given day, I might be looking at the little guys under a microscope, or tagging fish, or editing data packs, or writing documents, or driving crawlers and backhoes (being the ONLY biologist on site authorized in heavy equipment!), or applying compounds while wearing a big yellow moon suit—and I think that makes this job ANYTHING but mundane! I used to be a Junior High and High School science teacher which, the way I taught, was ALSO anything but mundane [except for calling Joey's mom to tell him how he created chlorine gas during lunch and the whole school had to be evacuated, or explaining to the second grade teacher that she really *did* need to be able to identify a copperhead, in case one of her students brought (another) one into class in his pocket].

I can easily separate Middle Ages stuff (we regularly don't use "medieval" around here, since the Bible Belt locals

are more likely to hear "evil" than anything else) from 20th century stuff, without offending anyone.

—Aeruin ni hEarain O Chonemara [Meridies]¹

There is another excellent reason not to discontinue the use of "mundane." It is, for most people, a non-intrusive word; that is, it does not shatter our illusion of the Middle Ages. One can say, "those two Mundanes over there" in the same way that one might say "those two Saxons" or "those two Picts" and not miss a beat. Try talking about "those two modern people" the next time you are in persona, and see if you can maintain the illusion, or if you find yourself suddenly snapped back to the 20th century, as part of some weirdo club where you pretend you're all from the past. If we decide that we're all just pretending, and we know it, then why not bring ice coolers and electric lamps and digital watches and flash cameras openly, and accept them?

—Michael of the Isles [East]

The Dream

Botheration, Ælflæd, I seem to have pushed one of your buttons here, and I mean to go on pushing it. Is this, or is this not, an educational organization? Do we, or do we not, encourage people to speak "forsoothly"? There's a lot more to culture than fine clothes and fancy tents. Let's encourage people to be more articulate—although this crowd sure doesn't need it. Or, as William The once said, "if you can't say something nice, at least say it *well*." Please don't get the idea that I think people who use "the Dream" don't share many of the same ideals and aspirations that I do. I simply don't care for their manner of expressing (if you can call it that) themselves. Some folks don't like the use of "basically." I, even as my dear companion in adversity, Duke John the Bearkiller (kudos to you; John!) says, don't like the use of (*aack-phfft!*) "the Dream." As Lord Karl the Meek and Mild once said, "We're not ready for the Dream. We're still working on the Hallucination."

—Tatiana Nikolaevna Tumanova [West]

¹ This issue is so late that by the time I got this comment in, Aeruin had become Queen of Meridies. She has lived in the Middle, Ansteorra and Meridies. She has been a Laurel for seven years, for costuming, needlework, music and bardcraft, and also has service awards, and an arts award given partially for armoring.

Before she received a Laurel, though, she received an award on January 7, 1984, about which she recently wrote this: "I'm the 9th Lion of Ansteorra, Defender of the Dream—and you know what? For something with no rank, no precedence, in Ansteorra at least it is the ultimate prestige award. But not for 'The Dream™.' It is for *being* what the SCA best exemplifies. I'm still trying to figure out what I did to earn such an honor—at the time, I was the only non-noble or non-Peer that had ever been so recognized. I just was myself—an adequate fighter with a passion for looking damn good on the field, a maker of pavilions, capable of embroidering anything that would sit still for five minutes, with things Celtic, and I guess I was the kind of example that Their Majesties wanted others to use as a role model. Like I said, I'm still baffled—honored, but baffled."

The preceding was not written for purposes of this biography, but it was the best thing I had on hand. It wasn't written as a brag—it was a gush. We were on the subject of the Walker of the Way, a similar award in the Outlands.

Tiptoeing delicately out onto the wire, I'd like to say that I defend Tatiana's opinion, if not her delivery.¹ I'm one of the people Ælflæd defends, being incapable of "eloquent speeches," and yet "the Dream" does seem rather trite. The SCA is not a "dream" to me. It's how I think day to day, whether I'm in costume or not.

To tie in Brion Thornbird's argument that it is the element of "fantasy" that is a primary factor in drawing people in—that's not been my experience. Probably 90% of the people in my acquaintance joined for the same reason I did—living chivalry; knowing honor has a place in our lives, and being frustrated that it has very little use in the "real" world. As for the romance being an attraction, I won't argue that point. Wanting to learn or having skills that are of no use in the real world, and needing an outlet for those skills—those I won't argue with, either.

I think I object to "dream" because it infers this idea of "fantasy." The SCA is a concrete part of my life. It doesn't live only in books, or music, or my head. It's here, and it's as real as the job I go to every day, and sometimes it's even more real than that, affecting how I *do* that job.

I sign my letters "Yr humble servant," "in service," or "Yrs in service." I'm not serving a nebulous "dream." I serve my king, my kingdom, and the SCA. Do we need a hackneyed catch all phrase, even if we're not eloquent?

—Gwyneth merch Llewellyn [Caid]

Not my favorite term. If I have to use a single term that will fit on a button or bumpersticker, I prefer "The Game." To me, games are more satisfying—there's more a sense of reality, solidity, control, substance, and so on compared to dreams. The SCA has rules, dreams don't (as far as I know). I apply the things learned from the SCA to modern life and vice versa—who does this (more than rarely) with their dreams? Someone's dream is just their way of playing the game, in my view.

—Yves Fortanier [Meridies]

As far as I am concerned, this phrase belongs to Martin Luther King, Jr., and perhaps the occasional Olympic hopeful. The only SCA context I can imagine for "The Dream" is simply an extension of MLK's philosophy into the organization—that we judge individuals on the basis of the content of their character, not on external factors, and we extend everyone in the organization the same opportunities to participate and achieve recognition, etc. (whether they've paid up or not, but that's another topic). I agree with others that there is just too much about the SCA that *is* real—the friendships you make and the skills you learn, for example.

I genuinely feel that "The Dream" is too inaccurate, too vague, and therefore an inappropriate term to describe what we do. It's a term that gets thrown around by too many other sources as well. I'm sure Wilson Phillips weren't singing about Caid in "The Dream is Still Alive" and NASA certainly wasn't talking about medieval/renaissance reenactment in their IMAX film of similar name.

Even though it only covers a part of what we do, the term I find myself using the most often to describe our activities is

"hands-on history."

—Mistress Margala of Dovedale [Meridies]

We all have our own concept of it, and some of us call it other things. I think we all have points where it crosses over and is common to all of us. I don't use the term—though I have before. I am most touched by the odd moment or occurrence. The sight of my husband and his squires in armor, mounted on horseback, availing themselves of everything heraldic they possess. The mounted pass made by Duc Armand and Duke Heinrich at Grand Court at TFYC. The lit vigil chamber in the civil war fort on Dauphin Island and the elaborate tableau staged for a member of my household prior to this elevation to the chivalry. The tears in my husband's eyes as he knelt in full armor on the tourney field prior to a Crown Tournament when he was elevated. These experiences are entirely too moving for me to sum up in two words. Call it what you will but remember that it takes the contributions of all of us to make it what it is.

—Rhianon of the Isle [Meridies]

EVENTS

SERVING AT TABLE: In my household, it is our custom that, when servers are needed from each table, it is the great honour of the peers of the household (five knights, two active Laurels) to provide this service for the rest of our haus. Is this considered unusual? I once heard, long ago, that the higher the person's rank, the more s/he should strive to serve, aid, and generally be nice to everyone else. Sure I can yell for a squire to help me unload the car, but I'd rather he helped my apprentice and her family, or the woman two cars down struggling with a basket and a baby. If he didn't I certainly would. If getting a peerage meant the peer becomes a cripple, no one ever let me in on that secret! (Maybe they would have told me that at the vigil I didn't have?)

—Mistress Dorren of Ashwell [East]

KINGSHIP

Life is full of nasty choices. If the job's too dangerous (or complicated or expensive or difficult or exhausting), don't take it. It's that simple. I don't think the kingdoms should pay for the royalty's travel, and I don't think royalty business should be conducted by telephone, so I don't think the kingdoms should pay phone bills, either.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

Thanks to Robin. Your words in my defense were a delight for me to read. As period as royal financial complaints may be, it just doesn't feel very regal hearing them whine.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

I think reigns must be a lot like weddings—they can be expensive, but they don't *have* to be. I've known people who have pulled their reigns off successfully on a shoestring budget. Of course, those donations for travel expenses don't hurt, either. I agree wholeheartedly with Bearkiller that the Crown's phone bills should be reimbursed.

—Mistress Margala of Dovedale [Meridies]

¹ TW #11, page 7

Back when I was Queen, in the Paleolithic, I had a GREAT time. I travelled all over the kingdom (admittedly easier back then, but I did go to Edmonton and Calgary by myself). I was a "Gold Key" Queen, making a point of walking up to people I didn't know and talking to them. I still find I enjoy myself best at events if I make an effort to talk to at least one person I haven't chatted with before. For me, one of the best parts of being Queen was the opportunity to put my fingerprints on the practices of the Kingdom, as one of the other ladies mentioned. To this day there are things in the coronation ceremony that I created, and are now hoary with ancient tradition. I always feel thrilled when I hear the words "...founded by Princess Maelen of An Tir, and confirmed by Morag, the first Queen..." which is part of the Forget-me-not ceremony (Queen's recognition of those who were big helps). One thing I thought about the night I became Crown Princess was that while there would undoubtedly be MANY Queens of An Tir, I will forever be the first. And that makes me very happy indeed. I love my Kingdom.

—Morag Campbell of Glenbourne [An Tir]

In which kingdoms do the King and Queen "die off" before the new royalty is crowned? Here in Meridies, that's the case. In the East, power is passed on, and the transition is direct, King to King. I always found that "passing on the magic," much as is done in a knighting, was palpable and special. To those who say that in the real Middle Ages kings died and that's why there were new kings—our method of choosing Kings isn't precisely authentic, either. I think this is another case of ceremony and how such is viewed. Comments?

—Tamera FitzGloucestre of the White Boar [Meridies]

We discussed this at Estrella, on Sunday night. There were people there from Caid, Outlands, Meridies and Calontir at the time this came up. What I understood from that conversation was that Meridies is the only place with routine killing-off, Atenveldt kings crown themselves (the queen returns her crown to the king, and he leaves both crowns on the thrones), Caid's kings are crowned by their predecessors, as are the Middle's, and here's the interesting part: Calontir and the Outlands both pointedly left their parent kingdoms' traditions, so that Calontir kings crown themselves, but Outlandish kings are crowned by kings.

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

DAME/SIR

We have four Ladies in the Midrealm who use the title Dame. They're all Laurels.

—Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]

REGALIA AND PEERS

Crowns and coronets are overworn in the SCA. I think that's part of the reason why there are centuries-old crowns in the Crown Jewels that are in perfect condition, yet the original Crowns of the East, less than a quarter-century old, are badly damaged. Kings of the first Middle Ages did not wear their crowns when using the privy or playing dice

around the castle; they wore them for state occasions. As far as making the royalty identifiable to the people is concerned, how many people are there likely to be at an average event who don't know what the king and queen look like? And can't the people who do know them be relied upon to point them out to newcomers and people who've never seen them before?

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

No, you should not wear all your regalia all the time. Wear what you feel is appropriate. This applies to royalty as well. I almost always wear a whit belt (mostly because those are the belts I own), but usually not the rest of the gee gaws I am entitled to. I have an exquisite coronet which I generally only wear at Coronations, Crown Tournaments, Twelfth Night, and Wars—events of high estate whose modern equivalents call for dinner clothes or a tuxedo. Similarly I believe it is silly for a king to walk around with the crown on his head at all times. When I have been king, I normally left the crown on the throne or with a trusted and right honorable friend and put it on when I was doing expressly kingly things: giving out awards, marshalling the finals of Crown Tourney, smacking bad puppies on the nose with a rolled-up scepter, etc.

The argument for compulsory wearing of regalia seems to boil down to, "So newcomers know who you are, or to put on a show for the rest of us." By their deeds shall you know them, and put on your own damn show. Isn't that a lot of what the SCA's about?

—Gyrth Oldcastle [Atlantia]

I tend to be informal. I have three Laurel Medallions: one for court on a livery collar, one for everyday use (the stealth Laurel), and one big one to wear when I'm at Pennsic. I wear the medallion not for other people to see, but for me to see. I want to remember my vows at all times and in all places.

—Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]

I always wear all my "stuff." I used to wear all my danglies at once, until I commissioned a lady to embroider all my awards onto a thingie that I wear like a favor. That way I can be in "full dress" without being overly obnoxious or uncomfortable. Still, I've been accused of being "snooty" because of it.

Consider, though: if I were, say, a Knight of the Garter in period, I would take my collar off only to go to bed, pretty much. I have no use for this "aw shucks" false modesty. I earned my stuff, and I'm darned proud of it, thank you very much. I greatly doubt that anyone could possibly be "in awe" of me. It's not what you wear, it's how you act.

—Steffan ap Cennydd [East]

CAMPAIGNING FOR PEERAGE

I dislike peerage campaigns. I will listen to any recommendation that someone be added to the watch list, and I'll pass along observations to the order and the crown, but I do hate campaigns.

—Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]

JUDGEMENT

In my zeal to express myself on the topic of Judgement (*TW* 14:25), I'm afraid I stated my point rather incorrectly. Votes in peerage councils in Caid are for recommendation purposes only. It is ultimately the Crown that decides who is elevated to each of the peerages. I regret (and apologize) that my comments led anyone to think otherwise. *Sigh* So much for my great career as a *ThinkWell* journalist.

—Aliske MacKyven Raizel [Caid]

Mistress Aliske, many others have phrased descriptions of Caid's peerage councils so much like you did that even if you are technically wrong, it still indicates a fundamental difference between Caid's procedure and that of other kingdoms.

Please write some more! It's not your fault Caid is strange. [Joke! Call off the ethnocentricity cops.]

-ælfæd

I have a kingdom service award, and I'm *still* not quite sure what I did to get it. Had something to do with lots of scrolls for the Signet Office, but I thought that's part of why I got the Kingdom Arts award and the Laurel. To this day I don't know how to answer the pollings, because I don't know how much work is enough work. If anyone could help me out on this one, I'd sure be grateful! Bish?

—Dorren of Ashwell [East]

I have this fantasy. Some day, far in the future, when I am, no doubt, a better and more worthy person than I am today, my name will be mentioned in a peerage circle and all the peers gathered will think "Gosh! That's right! We should make him a ———. He obviously deserves it!" Silly fantasy, huh? Not very likely...but I like it. It skips that awful middle stage where people I consider my friends have to sit around in a circle and judge me.

It is not so much the act of judging that scares me—people judge each other every day. It is the act of sharing that judgement, even in private. If I knew in advance that only good things would be said, then things would be different. I don't know that the opinions expressed will be favorable. Neither does anyone else. I think people fear judgement because they fear that "bad things" will be said behind their back—lies voiced without reply or unpleasant truths revealed without mitigating circumstances.

—Simon d'Este of Mantua [West]

At a Royal University session the other year, there were "classes" called "Philosophy of the (Peerage Order of Choice)." These were peerage meetings where we talked philosophy, but I thought that it was a pity and a shame to exclude the rest of the populace. I've heard some damn fine points made by people not yet peers. What an opportunity we missed.

In the same vein, King Finn and Queen Garlanda sent out an essay-question poll that had philosophy questions as part of it in May. The results, at least in my order, were astounding. We have no consensus on what we are or what we should be doing. Most of the Laurels in the Midrealm thought that

Mastery of the Art was the most important quality the Laurel should possess! I think that if more people in the kingdom knew how divergent our views are, they'd understand better why things happen the way they do.

—Sion Andreas O Wynedd [Middle]

CHARISMA

If two people are equal in all respects, but one is more charismatic (in the charming, constructive, non-cult-founding sense that you use in your discussion)—then recommend the more charismatic person. If chivalry and nobility are the pillars of our Society and honor and trust the glue that holds it together, then charisma (defined as the social graces that allow people to work together) is the oil that keeps us from scraping each other raw. This is a valuable and desirable characteristic, and therefore the two candidates are not equal.

—Simon d'Este of Mantua [West]

I've always been resistant to the idea of a recipe for Peerage. Kinda makes my teeth itch. After all the rational arguments have weighed in, I'm still inevitably drawn back to the ol' gut check. I know that I wonder seriously about anybody who seriously expects someone with lousy "people skills" to still be considered seriously for the Pelicanate...

—Ædward of Glastonburh [Meridies]

I have trouble taking Ælfæd's example quite seriously enough, simply because it doesn't seem realistic in my experience. To wit: I've never seen a case where two candidates for something were *so* closely matched that something as intangible as charisma became a serious factor. I can see it happening, but it's got to be damned rare.

Taking it on its fact though—the problem seems to be that Ælfæd is equating "charisma" with undefinable charm and goodness." That isn't an equation I'm comfortable with; charisma may well equal charm, but it certainly does *not* equal goodness. Sometimes the most charismatic people are the sorts who have really staunch friends and really implacable enemies, because that charisma is covering up serious character flaws. Ælfæd's definition of "charisma" may be different (and a bit more sweeping) than mine, but I suspect that mine is the more common...

There's probably an element of subtle jealousy involved, though, as well. The SCA is heavily populated with people who are or were severe social misfits, and most do not consider themselves as being, or capable of being, especially charismatic. It's easy to be unhappy with a criterion that you see as beyond your reach...

—Justin du Coeur [East]

Honestly, there was such a situation years ago (resolved), and there was another time that I really can't talk about.

In a "not for publication" note Justin gave me a solid example of someone with a lot of charisma who is not in the "good" category, and reminded me that most people don't seem to regard being charismatic and being an asshole as contradictory. This is fair and true. I remember learning in college that one of the common traits of psychopaths was their charming personalities.

I think Justin just ends his notes with ellipses so that he can still get the last word later...

—Ælfælð of Duckford [Outlands]

INTEGRITY / LONG MEMORIES

On the subject of whether or not people's past misdeeds should be forgotten, it is important to distinguish among different sorts of misdeeds. The fact that someone was ignorant or socially clumsy when he was eighteen tells us very little about whether he deserves a peerage at thirty. But if someone was a liar, cheat, and thief at thirty, it is not likely that he will be a knight ten years, or even thirty years, later.

A second important issue is whether or not new information makes old information obsolete. If we observe that someone is learned and courteous now, knowing what he was like ten years ago adds no useful information. If someone was a liar ten years ago but has not been caught in a lie recently, that may merely mean that he has gotten more careful.

All of which seems to me to imply that while we should be open to the fact that people change, we should also, in evaluating what someone is now, make use of past information where it is relevant.

—Cariadoc of the Bow [Middle]

I was discussing knighthood and How One Gets the Accolade with a lovely lady of some years' SCA duration who moved in-kingdom recently. One topic was the probability of one gentleman of our mutual acquaintance getting knighted in a year or two. "Not with his wife, he won't," she said, shaking her head. I replied, "I don't think that's the case in this kingdom. You're knighted if you're good enough, not whether everyone approves of your relations." She was taken aback with this idea—and I was taken aback with the idea that one's family can cause you to be blacklisted.

(—name removed in the interest of not hurting feelings)

Editor's note: The issue of difficult spouses is worthy of discussion, but we all need to be careful not to identify people indirectly.

AIDS

Years ago, when the worst that could happen after sex was an unwanted pregnancy or a need to visit the doctor to pick up some antibiotics, there was no need to discuss random matings or safe sex in a publication like this. Now, sex can KILL you. Teresa hit the jackpot when she said some view the SCA as a portable orgy. In our local group, young members date amongst themselves with great ardor. We are still a very tolerant organization when it comes to sexual morals. But until this *thing* is conquered, AIDS and its prevention are suitable topics for any mass-reaching publication.

—John the Bearkiller [Meridies]

We cannot continue to ignore AIDS in hope that it will go away. Johannes is right, AIDS is not something that

happens only to other people but it is all of our concern now. We have people who brag about their many "conquests" at events, others who only have an occasional "encounter" and all those in between. If the SCA can assist members affected by Desert Storm, and Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki, it can also address the issue of AIDS. We are not talking about what is or is not the SCA's responsibility or what is or is not period, but people's *lives*. God knows, we can't afford to lose any more lives because a few people wish to stick their heads in the sand and hide behind "it's not my problem (or period, or our function, or any other excuse they can come up with)."

—Teresa Berconi [Meridies]

Even in the Midwest, I have lost good friends to AIDS, in and out of the Society. Some of this has almost torn me apart, but I think that personal responsibility is personal responsibility. I am monogamous after a ten year celibacy. Other people can do that too.

—Sion Andreas o Wynedd [Middle]

HOW HAS THE SCA AFFECTED YOUR LIFE?

This is something that has been bothering me for some time, especially since I think there is probably nothing that can be done about it. The SCA can and does give self-esteem to otherwise nerdy types who find outlets and appreciation for their talents that don't exist in the real world. On the other hand, I know too many people who have come a long way in the SCA and, within our world, command great respect, who can't make it at all outside. I am one of the fortunate ones—my career was well underway before I met the SCA, and I have about as much status in the SCA as I do in my job. I have learned that this is *extremely rare*, and I think the SCA has something to do with it. How must it feel to be a knight who says jump to his squires and they ask how high on the way up, but who has to take orders every weekday from jerks who not only don't value his opinion but never ask for it?

There's more. I know one young man who is an example of chivalry, courtesy, responsibility and all the things we value, but has no college degree and little experience in any job worth having. I would give my eyeteeth to get him into a decent desk job before he rises too high in the SCA to make it easy to take orders. I have suggested him to just about every department in my company, but no one will give him a try because he lacks the degree and the experience. his SCA record would immediately recommend him to one of us, but it is either ignored or a hindrance in the business world.

Maybe we need to recruit more upper-level executives?

—Sister Kate [Caid]

Five years ago I was the mother of one young child, sitting in a park with six or eight moms, kids climbing on us, talking about what we had done before we decided to stay with children, and how and when we thought we would go back to paying jobs. Most of the others had masters' degrees, and were afraid the scientific fields would get away from them before they got back in. Some said, "I could go into occupational therapy part time," or "I need to go to medical

school when the kids are older," and so forth. When it was my turn I said, "I'm not going back to anything I've done before. When I need a job, though, I'll just make it known to my friends in the SCA that I'm ready to go to work and they'll find me a job." They all laughed at me, but I wasn't joking! I have had for some time the concept of "The SCA as employment agency." I know several stories of people getting jobs in just that way, or getting set up in a new town when they move, etc. It happens with other groups, and it works well sometimes for some of us.

Do you think the time might come when "Order of the Pelican, SCA" will be on resumes like "National Honor Society" is now?

—Ælfled of Duckford [Outlands]

It has given me a profound contempt for institutional and institutionalized hypocrisy. The SCA has given me too strong a believe in honor and integrity to condone the excesses of business and government (especially the latter). To paraphrase Douglas Adams, the San Francisco Civil Service Commission is going to be first against the wall when the revolution comes.

An unexpected way is that it improved my handwriting. Learning and using calligraphy forces one to concentrate on the form of the letter and the flow from one to the other. Since my arm was broken the second time, my penmanship has deteriorated, but I still use a 1.5mm chisel point for most of my limited hand-written correspondence.

Another is that all of that court, royalty and officer experience made me a much better Cub Scout pack leader than I would have been without it.

—Kevin Perigryne [West]

WHY ARE YOU STILL IN? SEGUEING NEATLY INTO SCRIBAL BACKLOG

I often try to figure out why I'm still in the SCA. I've been ready to quit more times than I can count. I think a lot of the attraction is constantly being able to evolve in your goals and skills. I am a good calligrapher, perhaps a more exceptional illuminator. Despite this, I'm choosing to pursue other interests that allow far less time to "continue to serve" in the manner for which I got the Laurel. But I think there's also a time, at least in the Signet Office, to kind of bow out gracefully and let newer artists have their glory too. We have a lot of scribes in the East. I'm one of the "older" ones, and I don't think I have anything left "to prove," if you'll forgive the phrasing. There are people more eager than I to do the work I've done for so many years, and there are things I've wanted to do but couldn't because I had to do a bunch of scrolls for an event. I don't actively seek the scribal work now, but I don't really complain if I get some; it's good to keep in practice. The pieces I do now, I do more for my own pleasure. If the Signet were short on people, I wouldn't hesitate to call up and go back to my old quotas. I still can have the satisfaction of wowing a Court if that's what I decide to do. In the East, the custom has become for the monarchs to hold up the scroll so the audience can sort of see it, and sometimes they read the name of the artist.) Lately my efforts have turned to fighting and needlework, along with

producing better garb. I doubt I'll ever forsake the scribal arts entirely, but it's nice to know that I'm not needed. It gives me the freedom to pursue other avenues, and there are so many in the SCA. I recently co-wrote my first filk, and it's pretty horrible, but we had a great time doing it.

And this leads in to the scribal stuff. I worked for the Signet for years. Did a lot of scrolls, usually with inadequate notice. I spent a lot of hours trying to pump out backlog scrolls that no one wanted to handle (I'm still doing that for two kingdoms, only a lot slower now.) And I think it's only recently that the populace has realized that these scrolls don't just materialize. Besides my mundane circumstances being very different when I was at my peak, it gets very expensive to continue to work for free. Most of the people who offered to pay me for doing a commission scroll are friends, but I couldn't/wouldn't charge unless they wanted vellum and/or real gold. But I think as a group, scribes are the only artists who are routinely expected to practice their craft, then *give it away*. I did a scroll not too long ago that took over 40 hours to complete. I don't think people realize or appreciate the work that sometimes goes into these things. I treasure every thank-you note I get, and they are few and far between.

I don't have a solution for this. I can't charge for what I do, really. The average Scadian doesn't have \$500 lying around to pay for a scroll (no gold, no vellum, primarily time). The SCA is one of the few markets for my work, one of the few places it's appreciated at all. Recently, I've had more trouble affording materials, and I sometimes wish there was a way to be reimbursed a little for some of the supplies, since I can't charge for the effort. I'd love to hear opinions on this topic.

A bit of background: It is tradition in the East for every award to be given with a scroll, regardless of registry of Arms or lack, whether or not the recipient is a member. Each of these is expected to be an original, completely hand-done work of art. We don't do photocopy, and lately, a lot of the promissories have been quickly hand-done as well. Last time I checked, we had very little backlog work. One of the requests of our Signet is that you not accept work unless you expect to be able to have it finished and on site the day it is to be given. Most of the time you get less than three weeks notice to accomplish this, usually closer to two. It's a high-pressure system, and one that leads quickly to burnout unless the workload is spread over a great number of people which it is at the moment. Many of the older scribes have burnt out, some more than once, from times when there have been few scribes and lots of awards. I'm still recovering, and it's been three years or more since I got a serious case of burnout.

—Mistress Dorren of Ashwell [East]

Every time I hear another scribe whining about doing so much work and being expected to give it away with little or not recognition or recompense I want to shake them until their teeth rattle!

Why do scribes seem to think they are the only artisans whose work is given away to others? I have made and given away uncounted pieces of garb to newer members, as well as making, and giving as presents, numerous coronation and investiture costumes. I know several metalsmiths, embroiderers, and woodworkers who continuously make new

regalia and rarely are given even materials reimbursement. My lord makes armor and weapons, and if we had all the armor he has given away we'd have to build an addition onto the house for it. Several artisans make items each reign to give to Their Majesties to use for largesse or presents to visiting royalty, etc. We, in Calontir, have two or three coinmakers who have made and presented a supply of coins to each king and queen.

Then, of course, we shouldn't forget the many hours of labor given by cooks who present feasts (they *never* get paid for their work!), or all the entertainers whose arts we enjoy at feasts and events. Our brewers and vintners (at least in Kansas) cannot legally *sell* their products, and therefore give most away. How many hours of work are given by our heralds, both in court and field and in researching and preparing our devices?

Scribes should take pride/consolation from the fact that the scrolls they make will usually become someone's treasured possession, displayed proudly in their home, and carefully preserved for a long time. If they want to see their work again, why not visit the recipient? My lord and I have been active in the Society long enough that our home has become something of a scroll gallery. Local scribes take tours of our house to admire and examine the wide variety of calligraphy and illumination work which we have been fortunate to collect.

The SCA is a perfect place for the barter system to work. Many of the artisans who produced scrolls for Count Valens and myself have been given presents in return—costuming, Valens' embroidered banners, food, rides to events, etc.

—Susannah Griffon [Calontir]

I may have the answer, *but first*: Mistress Susannah's rant above was not in response to Mistress Dorren's comments. Susannah wrote last fall, and Dorren just recently. Everyone can calm down and go back to their seats.

I've been thinking about this situation a lot and I have two theories to throw out to the piranha in all of you. If they're both picked to the bone it will not hurt my feelings. If I'm right, thought, I want credit forever for the brilliant insight.

Scrolls are women's work. DON'T SPAZ yet. Compare armoring on the one end, and cooking on the other. I think those are our extremes. Other things fall somewhere along the continuum. Women's work has never paid well. Women do the necessary daily things, and men do the occasional big-effort things. For court you need a throne and crowns and some scrolls. The throne and crowns are made once in a decade (not usually by women); the scrolls are made "daily." They are (in a way) expendable resources (like food is).

Another theory (which might fit into the same equation somewhere) is that those things which we have a right to expect (food at feasts, scrolls or medallions with earned awards, thank-you letters, charters, ceremonies) are to be done cheap or for nothing. They are gifts from the Crown (at least in appearance¹), and not from the artist. Those "extras" and

¹ Even though we pay for a feast, "its persona," if you will—the fiction of it—is that we are feasting in the baron's hall, through his largesse, or whatever—not that we've gone to a cafeteria and ordered the medieval special.

luxuries which we need to find for ourselves are the things we're more willing to see the artists charge money for.

I'm not recommending a gender-based division of labor at all, nor am I suggesting that calligraphy and illumination were women's work in the middle ages, nor that women do them better now. I'm familiar with the issues the women's movement has analyzed and dealt with over the past 25 years, and I'm glimpsing a possible parallel.

For Vagn's knighting, most of the "props" were gifts from the makers, but of those which were commissioned, the scroll undoubtedly took the most work. The sword and its scabbard, were paid for. We paid for the materials for the white tunic, and presented a box full of calligraphy books to the scribe (unlimited loan, since she felt uncomfortable accepting my 15-year collection for keeps; terms may change later).

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

SCA FUNERALS

The memorial last February (1992) for Master Knikolos Major of Salem-by-the-Sea was a good attempt at recreating an Elizabethan funeral procession, complete with catafalque, marshalled heraldic achievements, and an honor guard in full armor attending Knikolo's remains. What was for me so extraordinary was how generous Miles King's non-SCA friends and family were in letting us say goodbye in a church ceremony which brought us all together to celebrate how much he had meant to us all.

—Edward of Glastonburh [Meridies]

TALK SHOW

Careful, Ælflæd—you could be becoming the Larry King or Rush Limbaugh of the SCA. (From me, that's praise.)

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

David Frost was knighted on New Year's Eve. Just thought I would mention it.

—Ælflæd, the host of this talk show

THINKWELL DISCUSSIONS

I am planning a *ThinkWell* party at *Border Raids* in June (Middle and Meridies). It will be *very* informal, sit around the campsite and have digressing conversations type parties. I will provide a few munchies, but for the most part they will be bring-your-own-everything, including chairs. Details will be posted at the Troll Booth. I look forward to meeting some of the people I now know only through print.

—Teresa Berconi [Meridies]

We have been collecting firewood for Outlandish. Gunwaldt is autocrat, so someone else will have to tend the fire, but I will be camp-bound with sleeping children each evening and would welcome company.

We'll be across the road (south) of the main activities, behind "Club Argonia" and the bleachers. (You'll see it.)

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

FAN MAIL

I really like the way Conor mac Cineide writes. He seems to be able to express some very complex concepts with an economy of words (and so often it's the opinion I *myself* hold!).

—Adriana d'Orsay [CAID]

TAPPING OUT!

[On tapping out peerage candidates (TW 8:13)]

If this is NOT a rumor, somebody is flunking the courtesy test, big time!

—Kevin Perigryne [West]

It has been done even since Issue #8! It's not in the Outlands. It's bigger than a breadbox. I can say no more.

—Ælfled of Duckford [Outlands]

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Knight:

Sir Argo Ardril VerKayasc

Laurel (tie):

Master Beverly Hodghead/Master Alphonso de Castille

Pelican:

Master Boncouer (oops! that was the BoD)

Riposte question: What do all of them have in common?

--Kevin Perigryne [West]

THINKWELL

Does anybody else find it incongruous to be sitting at their P.C./Word Processor thinking/being fully in persona and writing about chivalry, honor and so on (talk about anachronism!)?

—Kevin Perigryne [West]

Justin, I don't think we're talking so much about rank as about our ideals.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

Could it be that so much of *ThinkWell* is devoted to the peerage because so many readers are peers? At least it seems so. Ælfled, can you give us rough numbers?

—Steffan ap Cennydd of Silverwing [East]

In Issue #14, Justin informed us that over 1/3 of #13 was about peerage itself. I made a rough count (which is all I *can* do) by this: I went through the subscription list and made a tic-mark in one of three columns: "are" "not" and "maybe." When I knew for sure there were two or three people at an address (especially if they were all listed on the subscription, or if I remembered from a letter, or whatever), I put two tic-marks, or three (in the appropriate columns). "Maybe" includes those people who chose to give me bare names. (In some cases I don't even have a person's SCA name, and until they write something for publication, I don't need it.) It also includes people whose SCA names I have but who didn't

specify awards. I neither called around, nor dug into the files for more clues. I just went from what I had recorded in the subscription file or what I knew personally or from their writings. This was done on March 14, and doesn't include subscribers since then. [Qualified enough? Good.]

154 (48%) are peers.

102 (31%) are not.

66 (21%) I don't know.

Of those who were lapsed:

6 (32%) are peers.

8 (42%) are not.

5 (26%) I don't know.

Since then one long-lapsed peer has renewed, and one non-peer has said she needs to drop for a while, but if I fix these numbers I need to fix the others.

Probably some non-peers have been elevated lately. I counted Vagn (new Knight, Outlands) and Loree (new Pelican, Atenveldt).

My guess is that it's probably 2/3 non-peers in the "I don't know." Some of the people might not have given titles because they really didn't have any. Some of those with reason to be sneaky, though, are probably peers.

Further FASCINATING Facts

I have 89 questionnaires. It is not too late to return yours.

To the non-peers in the readership: PLEASE don't feel crowded out. Items for publication are not chosen because of the rank of the writer. We're going for *quality* of ideas, not source. Every single one of us is or was a non-peer. Many of our writers have been "high and mighty" long enough that they truly *need* to know the perceptions of newer members. A person who joined in the '70's doesn't quite remember what it feels like to join today. Those who joined in the '60's, some of them might not be able to remember *anything*, so help us out! When the topic is enhanced by information from the old days, the members who have been in for 20 years and more are invaluable, but much of what we're discussing is current, and you undoubtedly know something about it just because of your own experiences that the others of us don't know.

--ælfled

EARNED ADVANTAGE NEXT TIME (maybe)

also: PUPPETMASTERS
(someday)

TYPO-FINDING CONTEST

Please never hesitate to point out typos to me. The first ten issues have gone back in for reprints twice, and I expect they all will. This, then, is just the first draft for the reprint. If this one is technically flawed, I would appreciate your help in perfecting it. Thanks!

(Earl Kevin has pointed out the populous populace in #14.)

PUBLICATION POLICIES and trivia

LEVITY and BREVITY

I won't publish things unless I have the author's SCA name, Earthly name, and address, but I might publish it "name withheld" or "anonymous" if requested.

Whether your things get in depends partly on what others sent, whether your comment fits in with another set of letters, etc. Just because something wasn't in this time won't mean it's not being saved for another issue.

FEEL FREE TO BRING UP NEW TOPICS as well as comment on what's gone before, even back to the first issue.

length—no such thing as too short. One-liner smart-aleck responses are welcome. If something needs to be long, try to make it fun. Long and humorless are the worst combo.

content—make it productive, positive, don't name names in a negative context

deadline—Send what you have when you're finished. If you miss one issue and it makes the one after, no big deal. When I get near thirty pages, I'll start winding it down.

format—legibly on paper, preferably (second choice is a diskette my Macintosh can read) PRINT NAMES if you're writing by hand, or write very carefully.

cartoons—same as above. Don't use recognizable people in a negative way.

Anything I think might get you or me into trouble will not be published (but I might send it back to be toned down, or print excerpts or a paraphrase).

Should they appear in your writing, the following words or phrases *might* be replaced quietly with a superior form taken from standard English:

smalls (unless you mean your drawers)

feastcrat / feast-o-crat

farspeaker

Duke Sir Mistress Master

mundane (if used as a noun; as an adjective I'll use it)

Really! I'm not joking! Don't use them!

ANACHRONOSOPHISTRY

The first time someone's comments are published, their name with titles (if I know them) will be used one or more times, and a little biography will appear. If I accidentally leave the biography out or get a more complete one later, a second biographical note might appear. Lack of title probably means only that the writer is a repeater.

In order to maintain a conversational tone, I'm not practicing editorial homogenization. Colloquialisms, contractions, person preferences on mechanics and spelling (Caid/CAID, AOA, AoA, brit spellings, etc.)—most are left as they are. This includes, sometimes, leaving things in I wouldn't personally use. I just clean it up enough to make it easily readable when necessary, *which is rare* because we're dealing with such good writers. I just wanted to point out that I'm aware of the inconsistencies.

A good way to get your stuff printed is to send happy, profound, fascinating, uplifting, useful stuff which has never been expressed so eloquently in words during this century. (Come as close as you can.)

A good way *not* to get your stuff published is to take the tone of "Ælfled, you ignorant slut," or to dare me to print it, or, Eeyore-like, say that I probably won't, because when stuff like that starts I stop having fun. *Not that it would happen, of course.*

It won't help to get your stuff in, but it might help the next issue come out a little sooner if you would be so kind as to give references as to what you're responding to, if it's something specific, by issue and maybe even page number. (If it's a general comment on a general subject, it makes no difference at all.)

THINKWELL #15

Copies as of April 25, 1993:

Outlands	52	An Tir	13
Meridies	34	Calontir	13
Caid	33	Atlantia	12
Middle	26	West	12
Ansteorra	24	Atenveldt	11
East	16	Trimaris	8

Meridies pulled ahead of Caid; An Tir jumped nearly 100%, from 7 to 13 subscriptions. The East held its place without changing numbers. Over two dozen are expired; no longer anything to brag about.

LAPSEPROOF has its limits--some are "on hold" now.

Copies are going to Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Japan, and Somalia. We even have a subscriber in Indiana and Connecticut! As of the printing of this issue, there are still no subscriptions going to Drachenwald, although I have heard that someone there has read a copy and made a transAtlantic call to discuss it with the sender.

COMING UP

The tale of the king who had two peerages refused in one court...why we will never run out of jobs (for Pelican candidates)...who are those people with belts and medallions sweeping up after the feast?...when the wrong folks go kneel...and much, much more. *[and that's just the preview of Kevin Perigrinne's next letter!]*

FUNDRAISER

I'm selling actual original back issues of T.I. for \$4 to \$6 (depending on age and whether the issue is still available from the SCA stock clerk or not). Proceeds will be put directly toward printing and postage of *ThinkWell*. Please write 8116 Princess Jeanne NE, Albuquerque NM 87110 or call 505-299-2476.

In addition to the gracious Mistress Rodema, Baroness Elisheva, Lord Kristjan, Lady Gwyneth, Sir Lavan, Duke Artan and Countess Aziza, Sir Lars, Sir Raymond and Countess Susannah, I am grateful to Mistress Genevre, Baroness Susan the Midwife and Lady Elenfea for donations.

THANK YOU all who bought T.I.'s from me at Estrella and saved me the postage, and those who've ordered them by mail, too.

If you see someone about to throw T.I.s away
PLEASE try to get them for me.

Here ends *ThinkWell* #15, April 28, 1993

ThinkWell

Subscription Form

ISSUE #15 VERSION

U.S. addresses: four issues for \$10.^{00.1}

Make checks to "Sandra Dodd."

CANADIANS send a postal money order for \$10.20.

AUSTRALIANS contact Robert of Starmount

AUSTRALIANS in Tasmania can negotiate directly with Hrölf or Madeleine
about contributing to the *next* treasure trove they will send me.

NEW

Let me know if you want the next issue coming up or if you want to begin with the most recent.

#1-5 are available for \$10.

#6-10 also \$10.

#11, 12, 13, 14, 15: \$2.50 apiece.

later issues are too big to offer cheaper; sorry

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Titles, offices, etc. (if you're willing to say): _____

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¹ You can renew for any combination of issues, at \$2.50 each. If you want to expire with a number that's easy for you to remember, fix it that way. You can subscribe for one month in advance every time if you want to. If I quit publishing I'll refund everyone's unused portions. Really! I'm Honest Ælfæd!

